

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS  
IN ARMED CONFLICTS: PERSPECTIVES ON LIBERIA  
AND A WAY FORWARD FOR FUTURE WARS

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
Strategic Studies

by

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2016

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 06-10-2016		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) AUG 2015 – JUN 2016	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE  Factors Influencing the use of Child Soldiers in Armed Conflicts: Perspectives on Liberia and a Way Forward for Future Wars				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)  CPT Preston M. Varkpeh				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT  The use of child soldiers is a growing phenomenon affecting modern warfare. Although the concept is not new, underage combatants are continuing to increase and shape today's battle space. The increase in the use of children in armed conflicts is even more prevalent in Africa. This thesis therefore examines social, political, and economic factors that influence the use of child soldiers in armed conflicts. The thesis also suggests ways to mitigate these factors. The study covers the role of non-state actors and their influence on child soldiering. The research addresses national and international laws that have jurisdictions over non-state actors amid changing twenty-first century threats impacting warfare today.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Child Soldier, Underage Combatant, Natives, Settlers					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			(U)	99	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)  
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS IN ARMED CONFLICTS: PERSPECTIVES ON LIBERIA AND A WAY FORWARD FOR FUTURE WARS**, by CPT Preston M. Varkpeh, 99 pages.

The use of child soldiers is a growing phenomenon affecting modern warfare. Although the concept is not new, underage combatants are continuing to increase and shape today's battle space. The increase in the use of children in armed conflicts is even more prevalent in Africa. This thesis therefore examines social, political, and economic factors that influence the use of child soldiers in armed conflicts. The thesis also suggests ways to mitigate these factors. The study covers the role of non-state actors and their influence on child soldiering. The research addresses national and international laws that have jurisdictions over non-state actors amid changing twenty-first century threats impacting warfare today.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Let me begin by giving thanks to God for His continual guidance and protection for the completion of this thesis. I also extend heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to my thesis committee for their diligence and commitment in ensuring that I complete this project. This is especially true for Mr. Michael Weaver, who is concurrently conducting research and studying while serving as chairman of my committee. Mr. Roger J. Linder and Dr. Sean Kalic have been equally helpful in working with me to meet specific deadlines. I could not have completed this project without my committee. I am also thankful to my family, especially my wife and kids, for their support in enduring my prolonged absence from home to complete this thesis. I am grateful to the United States and Liberian Governments for my preferment in affording me the opportunity to study at U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

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## ACRONYMS

CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ICC	International Criminal Court
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LURD	Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	United Nations

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Children suffered some of the most horrific crimes committed during the Liberian Civil War and LURD [Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy] and MODEL [Movement for Democracy in Liberia] insurrections. They were forced to kill friends and family members including their parents, rape and be raped, serve as sexual slaves and prostitutes, labor, take drugs, engage in cannibalism, torture and pillage communities. Many were forced to be ‘juju’ controllers, ammunition carriers, spies, armed guards, arm bushels and so on.

— Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission,  
*Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report*

We arrived in the Sinkor area, during World War II; there was no food to eat. The family we stayed with had nothing, we were on our own. I decided to help a general who lived near [by]. I would draw water and do other jobs to help his staff. I was shown how to use an AK-47 and we would drive around town, stealing goods to bring back to his house. We would also force people into the car, those suspected of supporting LURD, and bring them back to the yard. They were beaten and a few were killed.

— Human Rights Watch, “Recruitment of Children’:  
How to Fight, How to Kill: Child Soldiers in Liberia”

Some people tried to hurt us to protect themselves, their family and communities. This was one of the consequences of civil war. People stopped trusting each other, and every stranger became an enemy. Even people who knew you became extremely careful about how they related or spoke to you.

— Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Gone Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*

### Overview

One of the complex problems associated with twenty-first century warfare is the proliferation of child soldiers in the modern battle space. The use of children in armed conflicts is becoming a common phenomenon for armed combatants and society at large. By 2007, amid different debates as to why children are used in armed conflicts, the United Nations (UN) estimates that more than 300,000 children had participated in armed



conflicts while serving as underage combatants.<sup>1</sup> The term underage combatants will be used interchangeably in this thesis to refer to child soldiers. The use of child soldiers is not particularly new in warfare. Children have always played supportive roles during armed conflicts such as armorer duties, sex workers, and could even partake in armed conflicts as spies.<sup>2</sup> Children, however, were generally not directly involved in combat roles until they reached required age limits.<sup>3</sup> The age requirements for child soldiers' participation in close combats evolved over long periods of time. Some societies required their citizens (especially the males) to serve in the military after reaching a set age. The drafting ages for children into armed services became a product of policy or political decision making. For example, while the United States generally puts recruitment age at eighteen, it is possible to enlist as early as seventeen with parental consent.<sup>4</sup> In Burundi, children were allowed to enlist at the age of sixteen (sometimes as early as ten) as reported in 2007.<sup>5</sup> Recent reports as of 2012 however reveal that the age limit for military service in Burundi is now set at eighteen.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Dye, "Child Soldiers, New Evidence, New Advocacy Approaches," United States Institute of Peace, August 2007, accessed September 28, 2015, <http://www.usip.org/publications/child-soldiers-new-evidence-new-advocacy-approaches>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Today's Military, "Review Military Entrance Requirements," accessed April 1, 2016, <http://todaysmilitary.com/joining/entrance-requirements>.

<sup>5</sup> NationMaster, "Burundi Military Stats," accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.nationmaster.com/country-info/profiles/Burundi/Military>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

In addition to age as the principal determinant for military service, underage combatants sometimes enlisted on the basis of their looks or heights, or when forced to do so by societal demands.<sup>7</sup> Other conditions to save the homelands have caused nations to have all of their societies involved in the defense of their countries or territories. Citizens became part of the national duty and employed all members of society, including children. A case in point is when France declared a “*l’avee en masse*,” and all citizens capable of military service were conscripted to defend the national cause during the French Revolutionary War of 1793.<sup>8</sup> Between 1939 and 1945 in Germany, Hitler’s “Boy Soldiers” were often drafted as early as thirteen to fight against the Polish and the rest of Europe.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the United States Marines Corps allows seventeen year olds to enlist, but can only serve combat roles after they are eighteen, and their enlistment has to be approved by their parents through a signed consent.<sup>10</sup> Different factors, therefore, can influence the use of children in combat situations. Although the characters and outcomes may be different, the reasons children get involved in armed conflicts often involve social, political, economic, and cultural factors.<sup>11</sup> Child soldiering is a problem that

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Alpha History, “The Levee En Masse (1793).” French Revolution, 2013, accessed March 5, 2016, <http://alphahistory.com/frenchrevolution/levee-en-masse-1793/>.

<sup>9</sup> The History Place, “Hitler Boy Soldiers: 1939-1945,” accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/hitleryouth/hj-boy-soldiers.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> USMCnet, “Enlistment Requirements,” accessed November 29, 2015, [http://www.usmc.net/enlisted\\_requirements](http://www.usmc.net/enlisted_requirements).

<sup>11</sup> Conrad Nyamutata, “From Heroes to Victims: An Analysis of the Mutation of the Social Meaning of Child Soldiering,” *International Criminal Law Review* 14, no. 3 (2014): 619-40.

affects both the children involved and society at large. The use of children in armed conflicts makes members of a society who are supposed to be the forerunners for the future to become social burdens to that society in the long term.

Although many modern societies still use child soldiers, underage combatants are particularly prevalent in Africa. For examples, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda has used child soldiers since the 1980s as a means of carrying out its ideological and political agenda.<sup>12</sup> The same is true for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia. Similarly, warlords use children in other parts of Africa such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, and the Central African Republic.<sup>13</sup> The current research, however, focuses on the West African sub-region with specific emphasis on the involvement of underage combatants in Liberia. In some instances, the research makes use of analyses (either in similarities or distinctions) between Sierra Leone's civil wars and the Liberian civil conflicts. The RUF employed child soldiers in similar ways as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, generally through a client-patron relationship. The cleavages of the wars in Liberia directly influenced Sierra Leone to the extent that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to deal with the historical contexts of the Liberian civil war without discussing the Sierra Leonean armed conflicts.

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<sup>12</sup> War Child, "The Lord's Resistance Army," accessed January 20, 2016, <https://www.warchild.org.uk/issues/the-lords-resistance-army>.

<sup>13</sup> Relief Web, "The Use of Children as Soldiers in Africa Report," April 17, 1999, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/C157333FCA91F573C1256C130033E448-chilsold.htm>.

The Liberian civil war affected different hegemonies of the Liberian society. Liberia as the first independent African Republic was perhaps a major factor that served as an impetus for the rest of the African continent in gaining independence from their colonial masters. As David Mastey observed in *National Narratives Reconciled in Contemporary Liberian Fiction*, Liberia became a forerunner for political and social justices in Africa.<sup>14</sup> At the time of independence, the West African nation was the first independent Republic in Africa. Ethiopia was the only other African country not under colonial rule when Liberia gained independence in 1847.<sup>15</sup> In spite of the role Liberia played as a symbol of independence for the Africa continent, the nation itself was founded on divided accounts.<sup>16</sup>

Four distinct groups were present when Liberia gained independence in 1847. The first group comprised of freed slaves of African descent who returned to Africa (Liberia) early in the 19th century to establish an independent black state.<sup>17</sup> These early settlers, most of whom came from the United States of America, became known as “Americo-Liberians.” The voyage from across the Atlantic Ocean in search of a home for freed Africans from the United States began in the early 1820s. The American Colonization Society began major plans in the settlement of the freed Africans. The American Colonization Society started its resettlement plans in the early 1820s, but it was not until

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<sup>14</sup> David Mastey, “National Narratives Reconciled in Contemporary Liberian Fiction,” *Research in African Literatures* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 151-65.

<sup>15</sup> BBC News, “Ethiopia Country Profile,” accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13349398>.

<sup>16</sup> Mastey, 165.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

the late 1800s and the early 19th century when the movement took full effect. It is essential to note here that the American Colonization Society was not the only organization to resettle free Africans from North America. The most notable of the other resettlement organizations was the Maryland State Colonization Society. The Maryland State Colonization Society primarily resettled Africans in the hinterland of Liberia and established Maryland in Africa which joined Liberia in 1857 and became Maryland County.<sup>18</sup>

The second group comprised of freemen from the Caribbean islands, who were influenced by the “Back to Africa Movement.” Members of the Back to Africa Movements settled in Liberia and easily assimilated into the Americo-Liberian ruling class, and later became indistinguishable from the Americo-Liberians. Persons liberated from slave vessels during the 1820s by the American Navy and deposited in Liberia rather than their places of origin, made up the third group that settled in Liberia and became known as the “Congoes.”<sup>19</sup> The Congoes were primarily dark skinned and resettled in Liberia due to circumstances beyond their control. It was easier, both as a function of material resources and time, to resettle the Congoes in Liberia than taking them to their different places of origin. Pursuant to the nature of their resettlement, the Congoes found it difficult to integrate into the Liberian society led by Americo-Liberians.<sup>20</sup> Finally, indigenous Liberians made up the fourth group and were comprised

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<sup>18</sup> William D. Hoyt and Penelope Campbell, “Maryland in Africa: the Maryland State Colonization Society, 1831-1857,” *The Journal of Southern History* 38, no. 1 (February 1972): 142-44.

<sup>19</sup> Mastey, 153.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

of sixteen tribes. The indigenous made up more than ninety percent of the population.<sup>21</sup> Despite this, natives were excluded from full participation in the political and economic life of Liberia for more than one hundred thirty three years.<sup>22</sup>

Distinct factors contributed to the exclusion of natives from the social and political life of Liberia. When free Africans left the United States to settle in Liberia, most of the African-American descendants kept their identity and transported the Western ways of life to their new home. The American culture was reflected in the social, political, and economic life of the settlers.<sup>23</sup> The settlers also had peculiar attributes that defined their political, social, and economic ways of life.<sup>24</sup> Natives, however, were generally disenfranchised to take part in the body polity of Liberia except a few who had been educated in the United States.<sup>25</sup> By the late 1910 and early 1920s, this mismatch in culture soon resulted in conflicts between the settlers and natives and generally impacted the Liberian political landscape. For example, a majority of Liberians were not allowed to partake in the political decision-making processes in Liberia except few Liberians, most of whom had acquired Western education.<sup>26</sup> To mention a few of the natives who assimilated into the settlers' culture, Dr. B. W. Payne was from Grand Bassa and served

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> A. B. Akpan, "Liberia and the Universal Negro Improvement Association: The Background to the Abortion of Garvey's Scheme for African Colonization," *The Journal of African History* 14, no. 1 (1973): 105-27.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

as cabinet member to President Charles D. B. King. He studied medicine in America before his appointment.<sup>27</sup> Others included Henry Too Wesley from the Grebo ethnic group who became Vice President to President King, and Momolu Massaquoi from the Vai ethnic group who became Acting Secretary of the Interior. Massaquoi subsequently headed the Liberian Consul in Germany.<sup>28</sup>

Another source of conflict between settlers and natives derived from misunderstandings in concepts of personal and public acquisitions, especially relative to the land tenure system during the formative days of the First Republic. Most of the external land dispute during this period emanated from Sierra Leone (a British colony) and Cote d'Ivoire (a French colony).<sup>29</sup> After the settlers arrived, most of the land along the coast became contested. Notably, the settlers and natives had many disputes with the Kru and Dei groups along the coast after the settlers arrived in the 1800s.<sup>30</sup> The most fervent of these coastal disputes involved the conflict between settlers and natives over the control of the Sassatown territory. Other causes of the conflicts between settlers and natives resulted from internal as well as external factors.

Due to the continual conflicts between settlers and natives along the coast up to the 1900s, the League of Nations was determined to make Liberia a protectorate state.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>30</sup> Amos J. Beyan, "Journey of Hope: The Back-to-Africa Movement in Arkansas in the Late 1800s," *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 3 (June 2005): 761-62.

<sup>31</sup> Ronald W. Davis, "The Liberian Struggle for Authority on the Kru Coast," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 8, no. 2 (1975): 222-65.

The League's commission arrived in Liberia in the 1900s and was led by Dr. M. D. Mackenzie who had an unbending determination to institute drastic reforms in settling the settlers-natives disputes. At the time of the League's commission arrival in Liberia, it was right in time to stop another fight between the Liberia Frontier Force and the Kru Frontier soldiers led by Juah Nimley over the control of the Sasstown territory.<sup>32</sup> External to Liberia but yet having impact on the settlers-natives conflict was the Great Depression of the 1930s.<sup>33</sup> Due to stiff opposition in the Government of Liberia as a result of prevailing economic activities, President Charles D.B. King and his Vice President, Allen Yancy, resigned and handed the governing power to Secretary of State, Edwin Barclay in December 1930.<sup>34</sup>

Amid this political vacuum that existed in the Liberian Government, the economic depression left the Government unable to adequately control employment and had disastrous effects on the Liberian treasury.<sup>35</sup> The inability of the Government to address the economic needs of society coupled with the settlers-natives dispute served as major sources of division between settlers and natives from the formative stages of Liberia. Misunderstandings over the land tenure system between settlers and natives were one of the principal foundations of sectarian conflicts in Liberia. Natives believe in communal ownership over certain common inheritances, and the principal form of group ownership was in land inheritance. The lands could be owned by clans, districts, or whole

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.



settlements who shared common ancestries or patrimony. The concept of communal ownership is still practiced in some parts of Liberia today, especially in the hinterland, where most take on the form of “Community Reserves.”<sup>36</sup>

Settlers, on the other hand, believed in private ownership and considered that all transactions made relative to land become legalized through the issuance of deed.<sup>37</sup> These specific instances over land made conflict inevitable between settlers and natives. Settlers eventually formed their own communities exclusive of natives. The division between the settlers and natives were shown in the running of the established government. For example, the Preamble of the First Liberian Republic read in part that the people of Liberia (settlers) were descendants of North America.<sup>38</sup>

The exclusion of natives from the political decision making of Liberia formed dissensions and served as a major divide between settlers and natives. This condition fueled conflicts between settlers and natives for generations. The causes of the 1980 Liberian civil war and beyond can therefore be traced to sectarian conflicts and cultures that existed in Liberia between settlers and natives from the early days of Liberia. The stories of division and retaliation became ingrained in the Liberian society for generations. The coup of 1980 in which a native soldier overthrew the Government of

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<sup>36</sup> Paul De Wit, “One Hundred Years of Community Land Rights in Liberia: Lessons Learned for the Future” (Paper prepared for presentation at the 2014 World Bank Conference on Land and Property, Washington, DC, March 24-27, 2014), accessed March 4, 2016, [https://www.conftool.com/landandpoverty2014/.../De\\_Wit-227\\_paper](https://www.conftool.com/landandpoverty2014/.../De_Wit-227_paper).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>38</sup> Constitutional Convention, *Liberian Constitution of 1847*, accessed March 4, 2016, [http://onliberia.org/con\\_1847.htm](http://onliberia.org/con_1847.htm).

Liberia and the aftermaths of the coup reflected an “Us” versus “Them” culture. This pattern of thinking based on sectarian groupings continued for centuries in Liberia.

The centralization of the political life exclusive of the natives was an eminent source of contention. Following the dissolution of the “Republican Party” in 1876, Liberia became a one-party state controlled by the “True Whig Party.”<sup>39</sup> Freed Africans, especially the light skinned, dominated the political landscape of Liberia until the early 1870s. By 1971, select group of indigenous gained limited representations in Liberian politics. These indigenous, however, did not fully participate in the body polity of Liberia until 1946.<sup>40</sup> Successive political administrations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, at least in theory, expressed their preference for the total integration of natives in politics. Despite many attempts, it was not until the ascendancy of William V.S. Tubman as President of Liberia in 1944 when indigenous Liberians fully participated in Liberian political endeavors.<sup>41</sup> Tubman outlined a series of reforms, such as the “Unification Policy” or “Uniform Program” designed to more fully incorporate indigenous Liberians into the political decision making of Liberia. The “Open Door” policy was more economic based and reflected the economic growth and integration of Liberia on the basis of wealth and income distribution.<sup>42</sup> Significant inequalities still

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Robin Dunn-Marcos et al., *Liberians: An Introduction to their History and Culture* (Washington, DC: Cultural Orientation Resource Center, 2005), accessed February 11, 2016, [www.culturalorientation.net/content/download/1358/.../Liberians.pdf](http://www.culturalorientation.net/content/download/1358/.../Liberians.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> Archives Online at Indiana University, William V.S. Tubman Papers, 1904-1992, accessed March 6, 2016, [http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/findingaids/view?doc.view=entire\\_text&docId=VAB6923](http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/findingaids/view?doc.view=entire_text&docId=VAB6923).

remained in the political system which functioned on the basis of a single political party, the True Whig Party. The Whig party political dominance continued until 1980 following the *coup d'état* led by a native Liberian soldier, Samuel K. Doe.<sup>43</sup>

The years following the coup witnessed wild bloodshed in the Liberian civil wars in which underage combatants became major players. According to the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) final report, children were used by all the warring factions including the Armed Forces of Liberia.<sup>44</sup> The reasons surrounding the use of children as combatants often involved social, political, or economic factors. The social aspect usually involved the children and could be as a result of peer pressure or involuntary actions from warlords. Economic factors also resulted to children engaging into child soldiering. When warlords take care of children and often provide daily sustenance, children under these circumstances may more frequently engage in child soldiering. Political, economic, and social conditions that influenced children's participation in armed conflicts have been shown in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. Child soldiers either directly fought the civil wars, or became supporters of warlords. The intent of this research, though based on historical narratives, is to investigate the economic, political, and social conditions that resulted in the use of underage combatants in the Liberian civil wars. The research seeks to examine warlords' preferences for child

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<sup>43</sup> Yolanda Covington-Ward, "Transforming Community, Recreating Selves: Interconnected Diasporas, Performance and the Shaping of Liberian Immigrant Identity," *Africa Today* 60, no. 1 (Fall 2013): 29-53.

<sup>44</sup> Republic of Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Appendices, Title 2: Children, the Conflict and the TRC Children Agenda* (Monrovia: 2009), accessed November 29, 2015, [http://trcofliberia.org/resources/reports/final/volume-three-2\\_layout-1.pdf](http://trcofliberia.org/resources/reports/final/volume-three-2_layout-1.pdf).

soldiers, economic conditions during the Liberian conflicts that resulted in children choosing to become part of the warring parties, and the role of peer pressure on children during the civil wars.<sup>45</sup>

The research also seeks to examine the legal frameworks from the perspective of victims' reparations. Liberia, like most post-conflict societies that used child soldiers, has primarily focused on going after the perpetrators to bring them to justice. Although international laws exist that should protect children affected by war, execution of these international conventions seems often reactive in addressing the issue of underage combatants. Additionally, since the conventions are meant to protect children during war, it is often difficult for international statutes to be effective in bringing warlords to justice when hostilities are still ongoing in the conflict regions. Most of the justice mechanisms are instituted after the conflicts are over and society is on its way to normalcy and recovery. This study, therefore, also focuses on the role of international law in ensuring that children are protected before wars affect them.

### Research Question

Is the use of child soldiers in armed conflicts a result of warlords' preference for children, the children's choice to become underage combatants (usually due to economic or social factors), or the bureaucratic delays of international and domestic law provisions in stopping the use of underage combatants? The secondary questions that the research seeks to answer are as follows:

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<sup>45</sup> Frank Faulkner, "Kindergarten Killers: Morality, Murder and Child Soldiers Problem," *Third World Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (August 2001): 491-504.

1. Why do warlords use child soldiers and whenever possible, are child soldiers preferred over adults during armed conflicts?
2. What are the most likely consequences of child soldiering on children and society during armed conflicts?
3. Despite the concept of sovereignty, are there possibilities for direct international involvements to stop child soldiering during armed conflicts?
4. Are current international laws more reactive than proactive in protecting children during armed conflicts?

### Significance of the Study

The use of underage combatants in armed conflict is a major concern the world is yet to grapple with. More than 300,000 underage combatants are already affected in regions across the world. Child soldiering is getting worse with the emergence of fundamentalist groups that are primarily non-state actors and are not likely to adhere to international laws. Protecting children under these adverse conditions characterized by hybrid threats, poses serious challenges to international law because of the disassociation of non-state actors of armed conflicts from the mainstream of the legal apparatus of national and international institutions. The significance of the study is also based on examining and exploring means by which the victims are reintegrated and rehabilitated into society. Currently, there are very little or no systems in place in post-conflict societies for child soldiers to be rehabilitated into society through long term programs. In most cases, the warlords are punished for crimes committed against children but the extent of making these standards applicable to non-state actors have always been a major challenge. This aspect of the research is a key focus of the study.

Additionally, the current research differs from previous ones in several ways. The study is focused on the role society plays (or should play) in the protection of child soldiers before they are affected by armed conflicts. Despite the current international laws systems, the prevalence of underage combatants is on the rise globally. Child soldiers are often at risk due to their inadequate levels of maturity needed to make good decisions during war situations.<sup>46</sup> The Laws of War, however, define combatants as persons with arms who have the potential of taking the life of other combatants or primarily soldiers who possess weapons.<sup>47</sup> This makes child soldiers legal targets for any armed groups. After the conflicts, concerns are put on warlords being brought to justice, and not much is done to rehabilitate or reintegrate the victims into society. After the conflicts, children become social burdens to the society in which they live, both in the short term and the long term. Such is the case with child soldiers in Liberia with most having greater possibilities of becoming part of gang or insurgent groups. The research therefore seeks to explore, in addition to other factors, the proactive means by which a collective approach can be applied to stop the use of children during armed conflicts.

The realities of child soldiering is prevalent on modern battlefields despite international and domestic laws prohibiting the use of children in armed conflicts. Although this phenomenon is common worldwide, the research will address the issue of child soldiers, with emphasis on the Liberian civil wars. The Liberian society is important to the issues of child soldiering. The conflict in Liberia had short and long ranges

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<sup>46</sup> Faulkner, 492.

<sup>47</sup> LTC Richard P. DiMeglio et al., *Laws of Arms Conflict*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: US Army International and Operations Law Department, 2012).

consequences. These attendant consequences are not only affecting Liberia, but also have regional implications. For example, during the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil conflicts, there were direct exchanges between fighters that took part in hostilities in Liberia and Sierra Leone.<sup>48</sup> The long term impacts after these conflicts also have regional consequences as most of the labor requirements for post-conflict recovery have to be imported from other countries into the region.

The need to address specific issues affecting children during armed conflicts, as well as preventing them from participating thereto, is the primary focus of this research. Past trends in dealing with child soldiers have stressed the need to hold perpetrators or warlords accountable. These trends, however, often fail to address the needs of victims and the rather reactive posture of international laws. For example, the application of current international conventions to regulate the conduct of armed conflicts could not prevent children from getting involved with armed combats in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and other regions in which children are still used as child soldiers today. In the case of Liberia, Charles Taylor was arrested and convicted. By the time Taylor was arrested, however, the conflict had already affected children, most of whom are victims today. Against these backdrops, the research seeks to find ways in which the problem can be legally tackled more aggressively. Finally, the research will offer recommendations to deal with the issues of child soldiers using a whole-of-society approach.

With the increase of non-state actors in the modern battle space, it is a challenge to formulate policies that will bring irregular warfare in check. These conditions,

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<sup>48</sup> David J. Francis, "'Paper Protection' Mechanisms: Child Soldiers and the International Protection of Children in Africa's Conflict Zones," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 45, no. 2 (2007): 207.

however, cannot be an excuse for all of humanity to ignore the use of child soldiers. Emphasis will be placed on the Liberian society in demonstrating the societal consequences of child soldiers in combat.

### Master of Military Art and Science Outline

Chapter 1, the Introduction, provides a general background of the research and focuses on the primary and secondary questions that the study seeks to answer. The chapter also considers the importance of the study, and how the study is distinct from other researches involving child soldiers. Chapter 2 of the research is the Review of Literature. It focuses on other works involving child soldiers and what other scholars have considered on the subject. Chapter 2 is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the existing literatures on underage combatants while the section deduces and makes conclusions based on existing historical narratives. Chapter 3, the Research Methodology, focuses on the type of research and considers possible biases that are likely to influence the research methods. Chapter 3 also discusses the weaknesses and limitations of the study, as well as the delimitations. Chapter 4 is the analysis chapter and it focuses on analyzing existing materials on the subject. Chapter 4, the Analyses, cover different materials and draws conclusions based on the primary and secondary questions.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate factors that influence the use of child soldiers in combat. The research considers the issues surrounding the involvement of underage combatants more particularly from the perspective of the victim. There are two sections comprising the literature review of this study. Section 1 focuses on existing literary works on the subject. It analyzes center on differing opinions and authors on the subject of child solders. The research also examines the short and long term consequences of war on both the children involved and society. Section 2 of the literature review deals with findings made by the study in section 1. The study will offer recommendations based on the analyses of the literary works.

#### Section 1: Existing Literature and Schools of Thought

The literature review begins with Frank Faulkner's *Kindergarten Killers: Morality, Murder, and the Child Soldier's Problem*.<sup>49</sup> Faulkner addresses the issues of child soldiers lengthily from both societal standpoint and the impact of child soldiering on the underage combatants. He defines the problem but made no possible recommendation to fix the situation. Faulkner also discussed socio-political and economic factors that foster child soldering during armed struggles.

"*Killing them Softly: At War With Children*" by Yvette D. Barnes is used extensively in the research. Barnes addressed some major legal concerns on the issues of child soldiering, especially when dealing with the "just war" concept which give soldiers

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<sup>49</sup> Faulkner, 491-504.

the right to justly oppose armed combatants despite their ages.<sup>50</sup> Barnes was also concerned with underage combatants from a global perspective as a common problem facing the world today. Barnes asserts that the use of children in combat is growing instead of decreasing. This reality is prevalent despite the fact that there are current international conventions preventing the use of children in armed conflicts. His work also focuses on the socio-political and economic variables that affect war situations and serve as catalysts in the use of child soldiers. Barnes' work is important to the research as it addresses three important concerns of the research: economic, social, and legal factors that influence the use of children in armed conflicts.

Similarly, Gillian Wigglesworth's work, "The End of Impunity? Lessons from Sierra Leone" is also vital to the research. It focuses on the legal implications of using child soldiers and the workings of the international systems to deal with perpetrators.<sup>51</sup> It also depicts that problems of underage combatants, if not curtailed, can have regional and global consequences. For example, the use of child soldiers in Liberia directly influenced the civil wars in Sierra Leone. Children who fought in the Liberian civil war easily crossed into Sierra Leone and joined the armed struggles, especially with the RUF.<sup>52</sup> As early as March 1991, fighters from Liberia (most of whom were children) crossed the Liberia-Sierra Leonean border into Sierra Leone to join the RUF movement, a situation

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<sup>50</sup> Yvette Barnes, "Killing Them Softly: At War with Children" (Master's thesis, Naval War College, Newport, RI, 2005).

<sup>51</sup> Gillian Wigglesworth, "The End of Impunity? Lessons from Sierra Leone," *International Affairs* 84, no. 4 (2008): 809-27.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 810.

that was predominantly sponsored by Charles Taylor.<sup>53</sup> Sierra Leone likewise had fighters with some of the warring factions in Liberia.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, many more innocent civilians lose their lives and the impact of the wars still raise social and economic concerns for Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, and the rest of the world. The work shows cross border criminal activities and how regional implications are eminent when society refuses to deal with the issues of child soldering. Wigglesworth's thesis depicts how societal influence creates regional or even world issues and may lead to crises if not handled properly. Sierra Leone and Liberia are classic examples of this reality. Some of the antecedents of the conflicts in Sierra Leone that brought Charles Taylor to face justice included an estimated 50,000 murders, hundreds of thousands of amputations, rape and sexual slavery, and thousands of children adopted and forced in becoming underage combatants.<sup>55</sup> Despite the range of considerations from the regional context, Wigglesworth again did not address the issues from the victims' point of view. The legal frameworks held warlords accountable but failed to become a major factor in dealing with the concerns of children impacted by the wars. Additionally, the work did not focus on the burden society tends to bear as a result of these social influences. The current research will focus on these aspects with both the long and short terms in mind.

A. B. Zack-Williams' work, "Child Soldiers in the Civil War in Sierra Leone" is vital to this research as it clearly outlines factors that led to the recruitment and use of

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 811.

children in Sierra Leone.<sup>56</sup> Zack-William outlined basic factors that are applicable to Sierra Leone, but it also involves comparative analysis of the West African sub-region in which Liberia is a part. The historical narratives for the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone are much intertwined. The article disclosed the effects of dysfunctional families and the consequences it could have on the future. The economic and political structures that result from failures of families to adequately care for their children are also emphasized.

Zack-Williams' work is essential to the research as he recognizes the social, political, and economic factors that are most likely to impact children during armed conflicts. His work is a classic that focuses on choices of children to voluntarily engage in armed conflicts, and other cases when children might be abducted by warlords to participate in armed conflicts.

The final report of the Liberia's *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* is of critical importance to the current research. The overarching purpose of the TRC's investigation was to identify factors that led to the Liberian civil conflicts, crimes committed in Liberia, and a means by which Liberia can be reconciled and foster national growth and development.<sup>57</sup> The TRC Reports are valid to this research as it contains testimonials from most of the major stakeholders in the Liberian conflict. The report also gives writers and researchers the ability to hear directly from some of the children who

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<sup>56</sup> A. B. Zack-Williams, "Child Soldiers in the Civil War in Sierra Leone," *Review of African Political Economy* 28, no. 87 (March 2001): 73-82.

<sup>57</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, *Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report* (Monrovia: TRC, 2009), accessed December 12, 2015, <http://trcofliberia.org/reports/final-report>.

participated in the Liberian civil wars. The work constitutes legal domestic and international consideration on engaging underage combatants as legal targets. According to the TRC, there are differences in international laws between International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law.<sup>58</sup> The difference between armed violence and armed conflicts is also emphasized in the TRC. These legal distinctions are important to this study as each seeks to explore the possibilities of legally stopping the use of children in armed conflicts.

The Research and Technology Organization of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization published its final report, *Child Soldiers as the Opposing Force*, which is very useful to the current research. Chapter 2 of the Research and Technology Organization final reports concentrates on child soldiers and the relevance of understanding the paradigms under which underage combatants are viewed in conventional and asymmetric warfare.<sup>59</sup> The report also concentrates on the psychological sufferings children endure after they confront conventional forces. The Research and Technology Organization report addresses the reasons why children become soldiers or engage in armed conflicts. These reasons range from economic, education, and family. Other factors include political and ideological factors, as well as the impacts of war on the moral developments of children and adolescents who engage in war situations.

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<sup>58</sup> The Liberian TRC defines armed violence as violations of IRHL and ICL, while armed conflicts involve violations of IHRL, ICL, and IHL. See page 30 of TRC report for detail.

<sup>59</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Child Soldiers as the Opposing Force* (Research and Technology Organization-NATO, 2011), accessed December 12, 2015, [www.rto.nato.int](http://www.rto.nato.int).

As a means of addressing the issues of underage combatants in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization theaters of war, the Research and Technology Organization reports considers the psychological, physical, and social consequences that ensue after children participate in armed conflicts. The Research and Technology Organization findings deal with moral panics that child soldiers undergo, especially in conditions when they are disconnected from adult supervisions on the battlefield. The report argues that there are new characters that define wars on the modern battlefield, a general concept commonly referred to as “New Wars.”<sup>60</sup> The concept of the new wars emphasized in the report is based on the premise that warfare is fundamentally fought between regular and irregular forces and with the continual increase of children in the modern battle space.<sup>61</sup>

To this end, two elements of warfare are constantly present in the modern battle space.<sup>62</sup> The first element present in today’s warfare is that the modern battlefield is characterized by conventional military structures based on the European military model of the twentieth century. Second and perhaps more important to the current research, is the idea that the old model of war will continue to influence future wars in which the laws of arms conflicts and international laws will remain a major part of “real soldiering.”<sup>63</sup> It can therefore be deduced that the factors of combat that influenced child soldiers in past wars are likely to be seen in future conflicts. The anthropological perspective of war based on modern institutions and democracies are likely to remain

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

prevalent even in the new wars' operational environment.<sup>64</sup> Adherence to international and national standards will still remain the basis for justifying and legitimizing international interventions around the world.<sup>65</sup> Despite efforts to stop or reduce child soldiering, underage combatants will still affect future conflicts, at least in the short term.<sup>66</sup> Poverty will be a major factor that will impact future warfare and could serve as a means for more children enlisting in armed conflicts. This reality covers both conventional and irregular forces since all stakeholders in armed conflicts are capable of using underage combatants.

Christopher Blattman and Edward Miguel's work, *Civil War*, is relevant to the research because of how the work portrays the economic implications that directly influence children during wars.<sup>67</sup> In Sub-Sahara Africa and the Minor River Basin where the Liberian civil wars took place, the economic consequences of the wars affect employments of youths in the post-conflict regions. As a result, it is likely to have conflicts regenerating in places with less economic activities and less skill sets as witnessed in Liberia during the civil war that affected the Minor River Union Region.

In addition to the economic influence that the use of child soldiers can pose to a given society, the psychological and repetitive impact of combats on the children themselves can be even more devastating. As Suzanne Miers observed in "Contemporary

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Christopher Blattman and Edward Miguel, "Civil War," *Journal of Economic Literature* 48, no. 1 (March 2010): 3-57.

Forms of Slavery,” the concept encompasses a wide range of exploitative practices including the abuse of children in armed conflicts.<sup>68</sup> In the normal sense of slavery, slaves are personally owned and can be resold or used at will.<sup>69</sup> As negotiated by the International Labor Organization in 1999 which ushered in the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, specific conditions must be present for a work not to constitute contemporary forms of child labor or modern slavery.<sup>70</sup> These include access to education and recreation, adequate care that promote physical and mental growth, and conditions that promote normal development of the human person.<sup>71</sup> Miers’ article is especially helpful to this research in dealing because underage combatants are generally employed in conventional warfare where most or all of these conditions are usually prevalent.

The *Slavery Convention of 1926* is also used as an important source document in this study. The Convention broadly defines slavery as “the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised.”<sup>72</sup> This definition is rather vague and does not clarify specific acts against children that would be considered slavery. In 1956, the UN remedied this situation by establishing set

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<sup>68</sup> Suzanne Miers, “Contemporary Forms of Slavery,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 34, no. 3 (2000): 714-47.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 730-731.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 731.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> United Nations, *Slavery Convention of 1926* (United Nations Human Rights: Office of the High Commission, 2016), accessed January 31, 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/SlaveryConvention.aspx>.



practices that constitute the act of modern slavery, including those involving armed conflicts. Debt bondage, servile forms of marriage (practiced by most terrorist groups today against their female conscripts), and the general exploitation of children by persons other than their parents are important considerations that the UN studied during the mid-1950s.<sup>73</sup>

Additionally, some critical international statutes that impact child soldiers and the conduct of war are essential for this research. The United Nations' General Assembly adopted the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child* on November 20, 1989 and it entered into force on September 2, 1990.<sup>74</sup> The Convention defines a child as any person less than eighteen years of age, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age of adulthood younger.<sup>75</sup> Based on this assertion, the Convention still leaves room for states to set their own standards for defining who an adult is. It is likely, therefore, for children in some countries or regions to get involved in armed conflicts at a much earlier age. The research seeks to further investigate the means by which this concern can be addressed. For example, although the set standards of age may be influenced at the national level, Article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) clearly articulates and requires states to prevent anyone under the age of fifteen

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<sup>73</sup> Miers, 714-15.

<sup>74</sup> UNICEF, "Fact Sheet: A Summary of the Rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child," accessed January 31, 2016, [http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

from taking direct part in hostilities.<sup>76</sup> Article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is as follows:

Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war. Children under fifteen should not be forced or recruited to take part in a war or join the armed forces. The Convention's Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict further develops this right, raising the age for direct participation in armed conflict to eighteen and establishing a ban on compulsory recruitment for children under eighteen.<sup>77</sup>

As depicted, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibits the use of children in armed conflicts and increased the age requirement of direct participation in combat to eighteen.<sup>78</sup> Although a ban is set on the compulsory recruitment of children, not much is considered based on voluntary recruitment. The Child Convention and its Additional Protocols established the enlistment age at eighteen. The Conventions however leverage conditions under which states can enlist personnel before eighteen.<sup>79</sup> At the age of fifteen, for example, a child may enlist in the armed forces of some countries voluntarily based on the country public policy preference for serving in the armed forces.<sup>80</sup> Additionally, the Convention requires governments to care for children. Notwithstanding this requirement, we see rise in the use of underage combatants in conflicts regions around the world. Once again, this aspect concerns one of

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> United Nations, "Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child," accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OPACCRRC.aspx>.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 236.

the primary research questions which is concerned with the rather reactive nature of the application of international statutes to international conflicts.

On the basis of International Criminal Law, the Literature Review also makes use of the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* (ICC). The statute establishes a permanent criminal court used to try international offenders of war crimes. This statute is essential to the research as it deals with the Liberian scenario. For example, Charles Taylor was former warlord for the National Patriotic Front of Liberia and later head of the Liberian Government. The ICC eventually tried and sentenced Taylor to prison. Taylor was convicted by the ICC for crimes committed in Sierra Leone, not necessarily for war crimes in Liberia.<sup>81</sup> Although the nature of war crimes committed in Liberia and Sierra Leone were relatively similar, the application of the *Rome Statute* against Taylor depicts the regional dimension of conflict and the essence of laws to govern cross border interactions.

In its definition of war crimes, the statute prohibits the conscripting or enlisting of children under the age of fifteen years into national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities in international conflicts.<sup>82</sup> In the case of international armed conflicts, it is illegal to conscript or enlist children under the age of fifteen years into armed forces or groups or using them to participate actively in hostilities.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, the Rome Statute sets international standards on defining adult when it clearly

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<sup>81</sup> Wigglesworth, 814.

<sup>82</sup> *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, 2002, accessed January 31, 2016, [https://www.icc-cpi.int/NR/rdonlyres/EA9AEFF7-5752-4F84-BE94-0A655EB30E16/0/Rome\\_Statute\\_English.pdf](https://www.icc-cpi.int/NR/rdonlyres/EA9AEFF7-5752-4F84-BE94-0A655EB30E16/0/Rome_Statute_English.pdf).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

dismisses having jurisdiction over offenses committed by persons partaking in armed conflicts who were less than eighteen years at the time of commission of said crimes.<sup>84</sup> Based on the limitation of the Rome Statute to not convict children for war crimes, it is essential to ensure soldiers are kept from armed combats so as to the smooth application of the laws of armed conflicts pertaining to adults and professional combatants in war situations.

Child labor is also a common means by which children support armed conflicts. The research therefore takes into cognizance the essence of the International Labor Law. In furtherance of the Slavery Convention of 1926, the International Labor Organization Minimum Age Convention 138 adopted a set of guidelines for regulating the use of human labor. The International Labor Organization Minimum Age Convention 138 mandates ratifying states to pursue national policies and ensure the effective abolition of child labor. It also raised the minimum age for admission of youths to a level consistent with the fullest physical and mental development of young persons.<sup>85</sup>

The International Labor Organization Worst Form of Child Labor Convention 182 came into force on November 19, 2000. All signatories to Convention 182 are to take effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor as a matter of urgency.<sup>86</sup> Convention 182 defines a child as a person under the age

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>85</sup> International Labor Organization, International Labor Convention, C138-Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), January 28, 2016, accessed January 31, 2016, [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/session\\_10\\_ILO.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/session_10_ILO.pdf).

<sup>86</sup> International Labor Organization, Convention 182, *Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor*,

of eighteen, and the worst forms of child labor include forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflicts.<sup>87</sup> Conventions 138 and 182, of the International Labor Organization, prohibit the use of underage combatants either as a form of employment or by means of force or coercion.

International Humanitarian Law is another legal consideration that will help the research adequately examine the primary and secondary questions of this study. The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and 1977 are important international legal instruments that help shape the debate on the use of underage combatants in armed conflicts. The four “Additional Protocols” to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 set fifteen as the minimum age for recruitment of persons in armed conflicts.<sup>88</sup> This standard applies to all parties to armed conflicts, governmental and non-governmental. It affects both international and domestic armed conflicts. Article 77(2) of Additional Protocol I is concerned with international armed conflicts and states that parties to the conflict shall take all feasible measures in order for children who are less than fifteen years of age to not directly engage in hostilities, and they shall not be recruited in the armed forces.<sup>89</sup>

Article 4(3)(c) of Additional Protocol II states that children under the age of fifteen should not be recruited in the armed forces nor allowed to take direct part in

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June 1999, accessed January 31, 2016, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc87/com-chic.htm>.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> International Red Cross, *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I)*, adopted June 8, 1977, accessed January 31, 2016, [http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA\\_CustomProductCatalog/m27740271\\_Additional\\_Protocol\\_I.pdf](http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m27740271_Additional_Protocol_I.pdf).

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

hostilities.<sup>90</sup> The argument put forth in Article 4(3)(c) is consistent with most international customary laws which provides that “children must not be recruited into armed forces or armed groups.”<sup>91</sup> The rules of employing children in armed conflicts are applicable to both governmental and non-governmental armed organizations.

At the regional level, the research seeks to deal specifically with child soldiers in Liberia, with comparisons or contractions made from Sierra Leone. *The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child* is the only legal and regional statute that addresses the use of children in armed conflicts. The Organization of African Unity adopted the African Charter on the Rights of the Child. The Charter came into force in November, 1999. According to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, a child is anyone below the age of eighteen and mandates that “States Parties to the present Charter shall take all necessary measures to ensure that no child shall take a direct part in hostilities and refrain in particular, from recruiting any child.”<sup>92</sup>

On a broader scope, the Literature Review also considers principles relating to child soldiers. The *Paris Commitments and Principles* of 2007 are broad guidelines on the involvement of children in armed conflicts. The Paris Commitments is aimed at

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<sup>90</sup> International Red Cross, *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II)*, adopted June 8, 1977, accessed January 31, 2016, [http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA\\_CustomProductCatalog/m27740272\\_Additional\\_Protocol\\_II.pdf](http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m27740272_Additional_Protocol_II.pdf).

<sup>91</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, “Rules of Customary International Humanitarian Law,” accessed January 31, 2016, [http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA\\_CustomProductCatalog/m27740271\\_Additional\\_Protocol\\_I.pdf](http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m27740271_Additional_Protocol_I.pdf).

<sup>92</sup> African Union, *The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*, 1999, accessed January 31, 2016, [http://au.int/en/sites/default/files/treaties/7773-file-charter\\_en\\_african\\_charter\\_on\\_the\\_rights\\_and\\_welfare\\_of\\_the\\_child\\_addisababa\\_july1990.pdf](http://au.int/en/sites/default/files/treaties/7773-file-charter_en_african_charter_on_the_rights_and_welfare_of_the_child_addisababa_july1990.pdf).

protecting children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups.<sup>93</sup> The Paris Commitments initially comprised of fifty-eight states in 2007. The drafting of the Paris Commitments were in furtherance of the Cape Town Principles and Best Practice on the prevention or recruitment of children in the armed forces and a demoralization and social reintegration of child soldiers in Africa.<sup>94</sup> The overarching goal of the Paris Commitments is to fight against the unlawful recruitment or use of children in armed conflicts. The Paris Declaration focuses on the protection of children from participating in war, and the unconditionally release of those already impacted by armed conflicts. The Declaration seeks to ensure that children get the best protection possible during armed situations. By 2011, there were more than ninety-five member states to the Paris Commitments.

The United Nations Security Council Children and Armed Conflict Framework are important to this study. The UN Security Council passed several regulations that condemned the use of children in armed conflicts. Since its establishment in 1999, UN Resolution 1261 expresses “grave concerns over the harmful and widespread impact of armed conflict on children and the long-term impact on durable peace, security and development.”<sup>95</sup> There are other resolutions that deal with the issue of armed conflicts. For example, Security Council Resolution 1379 adopted in 2001, called upon the UN

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<sup>93</sup> UNICEF, “The Paris Commitments to Protect Children from Unlawful Recruitment or Use by Armed Forces or Armed Groups,” February 28, 2007, accessed February 1, 2016, [http://www.unicef.org/lac/spbarbados/Planning/Global/Child%20protection/ParisCommitments\\_2007.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/lac/spbarbados/Planning/Global/Child%20protection/ParisCommitments_2007.pdf).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>95</sup> United Nations, Security Council Resolution 1261 (1999), accessed February 1, 2016, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1261\(1999\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1261(1999)).

Secretary General to deal with states that use underage combatants.<sup>96</sup> Resolution 1882 was later established in 2009 and prohibits attacks on schools. Resolution 1460 was adopted in 2003 and requires enlisted parties to enter into agreement with the UN on clear and timely bounds and actions to end the recruitment and use of children during armed conflicts.<sup>97</sup> United Nations Resolution 1612 established the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on grave violations against children in armed conflicts.<sup>98</sup> The purpose of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism is to provide for the systematic gathering of accurate, timely, and objective information on serious crimes committed against children in armed conflicts.

The United States' Congress, pursuant to the *Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2008*, categorized what constitutes a child soldier in the confines of international and national jurisdictions.<sup>99</sup> Consistent with the provision of the Optional Protocol to the CRC, child soldier generally means a person who is younger than eighteen years of age and takes part in hostilities as member of an armed organization.<sup>100</sup> This provision covers both state and non-state actors. The prohibition of children is consistent with international statutes and applies to all circumstances whether or not the use of the child in conflict is

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<sup>96</sup> United Nations, Security Council Resolution 1379 (2001), accessed February 3, 2016, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1379\(2001\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1379(2001)).

<sup>97</sup> United Nations, Security Council Resolution 1640 (2003), accessed February 3, 2016, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1460\(2003\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1460(2003)).

<sup>98</sup> United Nations, Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005), accessed February 3, 2016, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1612\(2003\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1612(2003)).

<sup>99</sup> United States Congress, *Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2008*, accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/135981.pdf>.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.



voluntary or involuntary. Additionally, the *Child Soldier Accountability Act of 2008* articulates the United States' Government position on the use of child soldiers during armed conflicts.

The United States condemns the conscription, force recruitment, and use of children by governments, paramilitaries, and other organizations.<sup>101</sup> From the perspective of the victim, the United States Government would expand ongoing services to rehabilitate recovered child soldiers and to reintegrate such children back into their respective communities.<sup>102</sup> The application of the law from the victim's perspective is essential to the current research. The ability for the victim to recover and become a contributing member to the society, as well as holding perpetrators accountable are focal areas of the study.

## Section 2: Conclusion

Conflict scholars, governments, and policy makers have different arguments as to why children engage in armed conflicts. In spite of the differences, the use of children in armed conflicts is often due to social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions. Sources also reveal that most of the societies in which children are used have historical patterns of conflicts or exist in region affected by conflicts. Liberia, for example, used child soldiers in armed conflicts during the civil war. The children used in Liberia generally became conscripted based on the sectarian conflicts that existed in Liberia from

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 3.

independence but never got resolved.<sup>103</sup> By 1980, the country engaged in prolonged civil war that affected the nation as a whole. The latent causes of the conflict can be traced from the founding of Liberia based on the findings of the TRC report on the Liberian civil war.<sup>104</sup>

Although the involvements of children in armed conflicts may seem voluntary, underage combatants' choice to become part of civil war are often motivated by economic and social conditions that sometimes leave them with very little or no alternatives.<sup>105</sup> As the Research and Technology Institute for North Atlantic Treaty Organization observed in its final report, *Child Soldiers as the Opposing Force*, military personnel need to be professional in the moral and ethical sense when conducting warfare, and there are no genuine justifications under which children should be used in armed conflicts as underage combatants. It is against common decency and has no moral justification.<sup>106</sup>

Proponents of the use of children in armed conflicts often rationalize their actions based on broad arguments. As Albert Bandura points out in *Social Learning Theory* while discussing the concept of moral disengagement, he asserts that “disengaging from the moral dimensions of situations is the result of blotting out of the moral agency.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, 15.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>105</sup> Faulkner, 495.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>107</sup> Albert Bandura, “Foreword,” *Social Learning and Cognition* (1978), ix. doi:10.1016/b978-0-12-596750-1.50004-6.

Ideally, all humans are cognizant of the consequences of their actions by virtue of their participation in society. The actions of individual to disengage the moral agent then, is based on fundamental factors such as moral justification, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparisons, and displacement of responsibility.<sup>108</sup> Others include disregard or distortion of responsibility, and dehumanization.<sup>109</sup>

Based on established arguments and the existing international statutes on the protection of children, the use of child soldiers during armed conflicts begin with national institutions that are signatories to the international conventions on the protection of children. Actions on the part of non-state actors focus more on the perspective of international law. National and international institutions must be committed in addressing the issue of child soldiers if there will make any progress in protecting children in future wars. Most of the burden is perhaps put on international systems since most internal conflicts function on failed states.

The research also considered international conventions and statutes involving child soldiers. The first that the research examined is the “International Human Rights Law.” Of critical importance to the use of international law, in addition to the traditional application, is the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Right of the Child. Although the earlier laws dealt with the actions of state actors on the battlefield, the Additional Protocol adopted on May 25, 2000 and ratified in 2002 by the United Nations General Assembly prohibits non-state actors from recruiting and using children

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<sup>108</sup> See Bandura’s *Social Cognitive Theory of Personality* (1999).

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

in armed conflicts until they are above eighteen years.<sup>110</sup> Since 2002, the CRC allowed states to accept volunteers as early as sixteen years but only after a binding declaration at the time of ratification or accession, which sets out their voluntary recruitment age and standardized safeguarded measures that states must adhere to.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts*, General Assembly Resolution A/RES/54/263 of May 25, 2000, accessed January 28, 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OPACCRC.aspx>.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3, the Research Methodology utilizes a qualitative approach to the study. The methodology also analyzes the primary and secondary research questions of the study. The choice of qualitative method is due to the definite problem sets that the research aims to address. The debate on the employment of children during armed conflicts is a topic that concerns all of humanity. The younger generations in a society are the forerunners of the future. Countries whose youthful populations are likely to become child soldiers incur social responsibilities that have consequences for the posterity of that society. The posterity of a nation depends on the future generations. When those who are to lead the future become child soldiers, there is the likelihood for that society to remain behind development. When the future leaders of a country are not trained or educated enough to run the affairs of the nation, it can result into negative social welfare for future generations.

Most of the problems involving underage combatants, therefore, have social implications for the future of society at large. The study therefore deems it necessary to use qualitative research method to address potential conflicts. Primary and secondary resources available on the subject, especially on the use of child soldiers in Liberia, are also qualitative, hence the need for a qualitative research method. The Research Methodology will also consider the limitations and weaknesses of the study. The research will address key definitions at the end of the chapter.

The Methodology also focuses on the repeatability of the study. The research is primarily supported by qualitative research methods. It deals with social studies of global

trends for the use of child soldiers in armed conflicts. The topic is best described using qualitative analyses. Warfare affects society principally by lowering the quality of life. The negative effects of war on society are even more prevalent among young children, especially if the children become soldiers. The effects of war have potential short term and long term consequences on children who become child soldiers. The materials available for this level of analyses are primarily qualitative in nature. The research therefore uses a qualitative approach because most of the archival data available on the subject are qualitative. Additionally, secondary resources available on the subject, especially on the use of child soldiers in Liberia, are also qualitative, hence the need for a qualitative research method. The Research Methodology will also consider the limitations and weaknesses of the study. Key definitions are described for clarity in the research design.

### Type of Research

The research is analyzed using a qualitative research design with a retrospective case study approach. A retrospective case study approach to research is designed to ensure all data, including first-person accounts, are collected after the fact.<sup>112</sup> The events and activities studied are in the past, and the outcomes of the events are known. In this method, the timeline of events usually change over an extended period of time after the events occur. All researches that make use of the retrospective case study approach consider three cardinal standards. First, the information used in a retrospective case study is only available after a significant event occurs. In the case of Liberia, the civil war in

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<sup>112</sup> Albert J. Mills, Gabrielle Durepos, and Elden White, *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, CA: Rolf A. Janke, 2011), 825-826.

Liberia is now over, and the country is on its way to economic recovery and stability. The use of child soldiers in Liberia is a thing of the past, and the consequences of using children in combats during the Liberian civil conflicts can now be adequately addressed.

Second, in a retrospective case study approach, the researcher has access to both first person accounts and archival data in the form of books, articles, or any available archives. Third, the outcomes and variables that are studied in a retrospective case study are already known when data are collected. The researcher may not directly be involved in the conflict but should have access to someone who directly observed or participated in the event.<sup>113</sup> In discussing child soldiers in Liberia, the current researcher lived in Liberia throughout the Liberian civil wars and witnessed many of the atrocities caused by the conflict. The researcher stayed in Liberia throughout until the end of the civil conflicts and personally observed the outcomes of child soldiers used during the conflict. The three conditions outlined above made it relevant to make use of the retrospective case study approach in this research.

#### Process to Answer Secondary Questions

The process of answering the secondary research questions is based primarily on archival data sources. The current research is a continued study of child soldiers and factors that influence the use of children during armed conflicts. The process of answering secondary questions involved the use of books, journals, online searches, official reports from organizations and groups, and other data sources related to the current topic. The advantage of using archival data in this research is based on the

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

relative availability of secondary materials that involves conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Qualitative research makes use of secondary research analysis since it involves the reuse of existing data to extend a pre-existing or undertake new analysis based on the existing data analysis.<sup>114</sup> The secondary research questions sparked new concerns focusing on the victims (children) in armed conflicts. Unlike previous work on child soldiers that focused on the state and non-state actors, the current research raises a new focus on consequences of the armed conflicts on the victims and the society at large.

Secondary data analysis is ideal for answering the secondary research questions because it focuses or highlights trends or patterns, which are methodological in framing the general flow of the research.<sup>115</sup> Secondary analysis is suited for this research as it deals with gaps in the analysis of the research undertaken.<sup>116</sup> The debate to stop the use of children in armed conflicts is not new. However, the pattern of dealing with conflicts involving children usually focuses attention and efforts on warlords and seeks to take actions against them. Second, not much seems to be done to prepare victims to become better contributors to their societies. Despite the prevalence of many international laws prohibiting the use of children in armed conflicts, recent reports indicate a rather sharp rise in the use of children as underage combatants.<sup>117</sup> The study addresses the short and long term consequences that child soldiering can have on society. There are many

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 845.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Patricia Lester et al., "Military Service, War, and Families: Considerations for Child Development, Preventions and Intervention," *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* 16, no. 3 (September 2016): 542-52.



international law provisions that address issues on child soldering, however, the existing statutes make no real recommendations in caring for victims (children) of armed conflicts before the perils of war affect them. The need for international law to affect address the issue of child soldiers by accounting for child solders as the victims of armed conflicts is a major aspect of this research.

### Definitions

African Union: The African Union is a continuation of the Organization of African Unity. The Organization of African Unity comprised of 32 member states at the time of establishment on May 25, 1963 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Organization of African Unity states had grown to 53 by 2002 at which time the name of the Organization changed to the African Union.<sup>118</sup>

Child: The CRC defines a “child” as “a person below the age of eighteen unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the monitoring body for the Convention, has encouraged States to review the age of majority if it is set below eighteen and to increase the level of protection for all children under eighteen.”<sup>119</sup>

Child Soldier: a person below the age of eighteen years of age who takes a direct part in hostilities as a member of a state or non-state armed organizations or groups,

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<sup>118</sup> African Union, “History of the OAU and AU,” accessed February 4, 2016, <http://www.au.int/en/history/oau-and-au>.

<sup>119</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of November 20, 1989, accessed February 4, 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>.

whether said participation or compulsory or voluntary. The definition of “Child Soldier” also includes; a person under fifteen years of age who has been voluntarily recruited into governmental armed forces.<sup>120</sup>

Economic Community of West African States: The Economic Community of West African States comprises fifteen member states of West Africa. The states within Economic Community of West African States are built on geo-political interests and cultural ties. Member States within the Economic Community of West African States sub-region foster economic, political, and military solidarities.<sup>121</sup>

Minor River Union: is an international institution comprising of Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, and Cote d’Ivoire. The Organization aims to strengthen the capacity of member states by integrating their economies and coordinating development programs through peace building, trade promotions, and industry.<sup>122</sup>

West Africa: A sub-region of Africa that consist of Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, Guinea, and Ghana. This thesis will concentrate predominately on the nations of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Nigeria when referring to West Africa.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Recent Relevant Legislation, *Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008*, accessed February 4, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/135981.pdf>.

<sup>121</sup> Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), “Member States,” accessed February 4, 2016, <http://www.ecowas.int/member-states/>.

<sup>122</sup> Manor River Union, “History,” accessed February 4, 2016, <http://manoriverunion.int/History.html>.

<sup>123</sup> United Nations Office for West Africa and Sahel, “Mandate for the United Nations Office for West Africa for 2014-2015,” accessed February 16, 2015, <http://unowa.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=752>.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

The use of child soldiers in armed conflicts results from social, political, and economic conditions that exist during war situations.<sup>124</sup> The application of these conditions as well as the means and methods used in the employment of underage combatants varies across diverse societies and cultures. As James Basumtwi-Sam observed in *Sustainable Peace and Development in Africa*, conflicts in Africa (including Liberia and Sierra Leone) are defined by these three factors. The “historical continent” factors takes political factors in Africa as the primary reasons why conflicts exist and by extension influences that use of children.<sup>125</sup> Contest over political power by various armed groups defy states’ legitimacy and leads to institutional failure to administer justice to the inhabitants.<sup>126</sup> These contests can also create divisions among the population and foster class struggle and sectarian conflict.<sup>127</sup> Seeking such relevance made child soldiers and other youths in Liberia to see themselves as liberators or freedom fighters.<sup>128</sup> The first and second factors often give rise to the third: struggle over the

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<sup>124</sup> Faulkner, 491-504.

<sup>125</sup> David S. McDonough, “From Guerrillas to Government: Post-Conflict Stability in Liberia, Uganda, and Rwanda,” *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (2008): 357-74, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20455044>.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

distribution of socio-economic resources.<sup>129</sup> Chapter 4 analyzes these factors through four child soldiers' models. These models include the Coerced Youth model, Revolutionary model, Delinquent Youth model, and the Youth Clientalism model.<sup>130</sup> These models are relevant to analyzing child soldiers in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and the application of each model across the social, political, and economic spectrums.

In the Coerced Youth model, children are seen as direct victims of armed conflicts, and that these victimizations are external factors forced on children by adult members in society.<sup>131</sup> It is a model fostered on a client-patron relationship in which the client has no dominant voice. The warlords in this case impose their will on their clients (child soldiers). The model stresses the involuntary nature of recruitment of children by warlords in both Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The Revolutionary model of child soldiering identifies the impact of perceived marginalization in youths for protracted periods that results in them opting for change in the political structures and governance mechanisms.<sup>132</sup> This model is applicable to Liberia primarily due to sectarian conflicts that existed in Liberia for long periods of time. The model also shares some semblances with the Delinquent Youth model, except that the actors within the Revolutionary model may not necessarily be unskilled compared to the "delinquent youths." Their actions, however, are often against socio-

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> William P. Murphy, "Military Patrimonialism and Child Soldier Clientalism in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean Civil Wars," *African Studies Review* 46, no. 2 (September 2003): 61-87.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

political and socio-economic marginalization in society. Continual tensions on the ways of life in Liberia affected children who after hearing their parents complain continually about the prolonged marginalization of natives, decided to become liberators. The revolutions in which children fought did not begin with the children themselves. The 1970s, for a case in point, witnessed different youth's uprisings in various institutions in Liberia. Such actions were also seen to have taken turns at the State-owned University of Liberia when youths often preached against policies in the Liberian political systems. The Moment for Justice in Africa was perhaps the most known of the youth groups. These revolutionary tendencies soon came to influence children who again saw themselves as liberators. Misunderstandings of complex issues in society can therefore have trigger-down consequences on children as was witnessed in Liberia with child soldiers. Many of the children were influenced by these adult revolutionary arguments without a thorough understanding of why the actions or inactions were necessary.

The Delinquent Youth model demonstrates the negative impact of patrimonial relationships which creates a culture of dependence in youths.<sup>133</sup> This is especially true of traditional rural societies in Liberia and Sierra Leone in which some children or youths believed in entitlements and blamed the rest of society for their lack of achievements. Actions affecting the application of this model are often reflected in the geo-economic or geo-political dynamics of a country or region. In the case of Liberia, one common argument among delinquent youths, for their delinquencies, is due to the continual dominance of the settlers in the socio-political and economic ways of life. These youths argue the settlers' monopoly of the affairs of state made most youths to not have adequate

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

education. Conflict scholars often view the 1980 *coup d'état* that deposed President William R. Tolbert, Jr. of Liberia, for example, as a struggle that allowed natives to finally have a voice in the Liberian political process.<sup>134</sup> Children who joined adults and fought these sectarian conflicts in Liberia (with most not understanding the true objectives for fighting) often thought of themselves as national liberators.

The Youth Clientalism model relies on the social, political, and economic benefits that children get for following warlords, who they view as the patrons.<sup>135</sup> This model is more useful to analyze child soldering across the political, economic, and social spheres for longer periods of time. The concept of patrimony in both pre-war and post-war status of Liberia and Sierra Leone is analyzed using this model. Warlords often took children during the Liberian civil wars and made them followers. Although this relationship can be mutually beneficial in relative proportions, the initial stages were often against the interest and growth of children. During the civil wars in Liberia, for example, the Armed Forces of Liberia and other warring factions used children, but some of the children also chose these options because of economic benefits such as looted good, or social benefits like being feared by other members of society, or having access to women against the females' will. There can be a number of different benefits children tend to gain, at least from their vantage points. All of these benefits are however directly linked with some services the children have to provide to their benefactors (the warlords).

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<sup>134</sup> Rare Historical Photos, "Cabinet Ministers Lined up for Execution after a Coup D'état in Liberia, 1980," March 11, 2014, accessed April 11, 2016, <http://rarehistoricalphotos.com/cabinet-ministers-execution-liberia-1980/>.

<sup>135</sup> Murphy, 65.

### Social Factors

Children's participation in armed conflicts can be either voluntary or involuntary. Social factors during violent conflicts are the major reasons why children get involved in armed conflicts. During conflicts, children become vulnerable due lack of parental care or family structure, peer pressure, as well as the conscription and use of children in armed conflicts by warlords. These conditions usually affect children and serve as catalyst for getting involved in armed conflicts. Unlike conventional forces, child soldiers are generally part of domestic conflicts or civil wars.<sup>136</sup> Most conventional soldiers enlist to serve national armies based on international standards for recruitment. Children, on the other hand, often enlist in civil wars during failed states. The social demands on children during prolonged civil conflicts are often due to societal actions or inactions to implement domestic or international conventions to curb the abuse of children.<sup>137</sup> In conflict societies, children are more likely to be impacted by war. The impact of war in Liberia and Sierra Leone had social implications for the developing children who were often left to face the harsh realities of life they had not been prepared for. The death or loss of a child parent, exposure to the harsh realities of war such as rape, the sight of dead bodies, and loss of a stable social order impair the development and reasoning of children during armed conflicts. These conditions can create social ineptitudes in children and limit their options for survival during armed conflicts. In the context of the Coerced

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<sup>136</sup> Vera Achvarina and Simon F. Reich, "No Place to Hide: Refugees, Displaced Persons, and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 127-64.

<sup>137</sup> Monique Ramgoolie, "Prosecution of Sierra Leone's Child Soldiers: What Message is the UN Trying to Send?" Princeton University, accessed February 25, 2016, <https://www.princeton.edu/jpia/past-issues-1/2001/8.pdf>.

Youth model, the influence of war on children makes them vulnerable population in armed conflicts.

The coercive nature of children's involvement became especially apparent in instances where both parents of a child (or children) died. The children were left to fend for themselves, and children faced with such conditions became vulnerable and made choices based on prevailing circumstances. In Liberia, for example, some war-ravaged children chose to fight because they believed it would make them belong to some kind of social group.<sup>138</sup> The need to belong to a social order can therefore serve as a forcing function for children to enlist as underage combatants. Fundamentally, children belong to a family circle and when that social construct no longer existed, most of them ended in rebel groups where their new profession also satisfied their family needs. The warlords filled the voids created by the parents' absence. This need for belonging, in children, was exploited by warlords. The children in turn owed total loyalty to the warlords. The need to belong to a social class or family often impacted the children in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. This is perhaps the primary reason why warlords tend to have particular interests in children as was seen with Joseph Kony's LRA in Uganda, the RUF in Sierra Leone, and other warring factions in Liberia.<sup>139</sup>

Additionally, peer pressure can play a major role during armed conflicts. The level of vulnerability of a child is also influenced by the degree of pressure the child may

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<sup>138</sup> Murphy, 65.

<sup>139</sup> The Telegraph, "Kony's Child Soldiers: 'When You Kill for the First Time, You Change'," accessed April 11, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/uganda/10621792/Konys-child-soldiers-When-you-kill-for-the-first-time-you-change.html>.



face from peers. Children who are refugees or internally displaced, for example, are at higher risk of being recruited by peers who have already joined rebel factions.<sup>140</sup> The rebels can become indistinct from the rest of the occupants in a refugee camp and can have relatively easy access to the rest of their peers. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees refers to this phenomenon as “refugee manipulation and militarization.”<sup>141</sup> Children’s involvements in armed conflicts are shaped in many ways by peer pressure.

The coercive nature of peer influence on children during armed conflicts may result in a further rise in the number of underage combatants. The ego’s gratification of being in the spotlight when others of the same age are involved makes the child soldiers’ dynamics even more interesting. Children sometimes admired societal dread of them on the center stage of events and it can often feel relevant to them when their peers or other members of society are afraid because of their fear of being harmed. The struggle to feel important among ones peers can be a driving force behind such actions. In some instances, peer pressure can be so strong to the point of involving the loss of life if the weaker peer refuses to join the rest of his contemporaries in the new way of life.<sup>142</sup> From the Clientalist approach, child soldiers who harm other children may do so as a way of further demonstrating loyalty to the warlord (who plays the role of the patron), or serve as

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<sup>140</sup> Achvarina and Reich, 140.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Coercion and Intimidation of Child Soldiers to Participate in Violence,” April 16, 2008, accessed February 25, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2008/04/16/coercion-and-intimidation-child-soldiers-participate-violence>.

a warning to other children who may want to leave the group.<sup>143</sup> This was evident during the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars that claimed the lives of many children while leaving others impoverished because they chose not to continue to play a role in the armed conflict. Warlords under such circumstances often use children as clients while they serve as warlords and patrons through a shadow state.<sup>144</sup>

As children grew up during the civil war, some began to realize that the life they led was not the best for them. To entice more children to join while retaining those who already had, warlords introduced new concepts of loyalty to their followers: the practice of voodoo.<sup>145</sup> Children in Liberia were exposed to rituals and sorceries which made them believe that they could not die from gunshots or be killed in combat.<sup>146</sup> The inherent nature of most children to take as true what is presented to them led to their acceptance of this pattern of thinking. Lack of education and maturity in children enabled warlords to easily influence the world view of their followers. The warlords or leaders of the child soldiers told the children that they would not die if they became “men” and not see themselves as boys. The child soldiers came to believe that eating another human being

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<sup>143</sup> Murphy, 67.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>145</sup> Stephen Ellis, “Mystical Weapons: Some Evidence from the Liberian War,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 31, no. 2 (May 2001): 222-36.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 223.

made them stronger as warriors.<sup>147</sup> The ability to become stronger could even be increased by eating the internal organs, especially the human heart.<sup>148</sup>

Children tend to be easily manipulated by their leaders and make decisions under pressure that adults are not likely to make when faced with the same or similar situations. As Faulkner puts it, common factors that may influence the recruitment of children in armed conflict can easily be attributed to those children with very little or no educational background.<sup>149</sup> Children from the most disadvantaged groups in society, and those separated from their parents (by death or other means) during hostilities are also likely to become underage combatants in regions impacted by armed conflicts.<sup>150</sup> Other influencing factors include children who become orphans, displaced, or refugees, or those impacted by disrupted family backgrounds such as from homes with divorced or estranged parents.<sup>151</sup> These conditions result in making the child susceptible to choosing the path of least resistance in meeting his or her needs. Liberia and Sierra Leone are classic examples where these factors are still evident after hostilities have long ended and the countries are on their way to economic recovery.

In many parts of the world today, underprivileged children are affected by armed conflicts. Disadvantaged children are more likely to become easy targets for recruitment

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Faulkner, 496.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

during major conflicts.<sup>152</sup> Most children taking part in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars became part of the conflict due to social and economic factors controlled by warlords in what came to be known as the “warlords’ economy.”<sup>153</sup> In the context of sovereignty and the need for a nation to provide for, and protect its citizens, it is necessary for governments to develop social welfare programs before conflicts begin. The programs’ primary objectives should be to prevent children from participating in armed conflicts, and the rehabilitation of victims and their reintegration as valuable members and contributors to their societies.

Child soldiering outside the Minor River basin is also true for many parts of Africa. To put underage combating in perspective outside of West Africa, the LRA can once again serve as a relevant description. During the initial stages of the conflict in Uganda, two features defined the actions of the LRA. First, the LRA movement brought with it an element of spirituality based on the utilization of a semblance of the precepts of Christianity.<sup>154</sup> The movement was led by Joseph Kony (although some accounts owe the movement’s founding to Alice Lakwena in the late 1980s).<sup>155</sup> Conditions in the LRA, therefore, had more of an ideological or religious nature (at least during the formative stages) of the conflict in Uganda. The specific social factors that subject children to armed conflicts may be different in distinct parts of Africa as witnessed in Liberia and

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Murphy, 70.

<sup>154</sup> Tim Allen, “Understanding Alice: Uganda’s Holy Spirit Movement in Context,” *Journal of International African Institute* 61, no. 3 (1991): 370-399, accessed February 20, 2016, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/1160031?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1160031?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

Uganda. In the case of Uganda, the tendency to infuse ideology into religion conditioned most warlords to conscript children.<sup>156</sup> Despite the differences in the application of the social variables, the effects on children in the short and long terms are generally the same. Child soldiering robs society of its future leaders and can lead to underdevelopment and breakdown in the social order.

The social aspect of the conflict became a major factor that impacted the social life of Ugandans, especially the “Acholi” people. As Wigglesworth observed, “children susceptible to partaking in armed conflicts often live in particular regions that have a historical pattern characterized by prolonged conflicts.”<sup>157</sup> Such was the case with Northern Uganda which is located in a region with a long historical precedence of conflict. Southern Sudan shares a border with Uganda in the north and the population of that area has a common life style and in some instances a common ancestry.<sup>158</sup>

The conflict between the Acholi ethnic minority and the government of Uganda led by Yoweri Museveni easily took a foothold because of the decades’ long historical precedence of conflicts in the Northern Ugandan and South Sudanese region.<sup>159</sup> In several instances, the Government of Sudan was accused by the Ugandan Government for supporting the Holy Spirit movement (later the LRA) in Northern Uganda, the

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Wigglesworth, 810-811.

<sup>158</sup> Samuel Okiror, “How the LRA still Haunts Northern Uganda. IRIN: the Inside Story on Emergencies,” *IRIN News*, February 17, 2016, accessed February 20, 2016, <http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2016/02/17/how-lra-still-haunts-northern-uganda>.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic.<sup>160</sup> After the conflict in Uganda subsided, the rebels continued their acts of aggression in neighboring countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic.<sup>161</sup> The actions of the remnants of the LRA are a clear indication of the destruction and regional impact child soldiering can have across different regions. The proximity of the conflict made it easy for children within these conflict regions in Northern Uganda, South Sudan, etcetera, to become victims of the existing war situations.

The second feature of the LRA was the fact that the movement specifically targeted children for recruitment.<sup>162</sup> Once recruited, children had very little or no chance to avoid active participation in the conflict. The children targeted were mostly underprivileged with very little care from state institutions. When state institutions do not protect children, the results can be devastating for future generations. A classic example of violation in a state's responsibility to protect children involves Boko Haram and its operation in Northern Nigeria.<sup>163</sup> Boko Haram as a movement started with the abuse of children when Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf established a mosque with a boarding school and

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<sup>160</sup> The Peninsula Qatar's Daily, "Ugandan LRA Rebels Captured in Central Africa was a Top Commander," February 10, 2016, accessed February 20, 2016, <http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/news/international/369895/ugandan-lra-rebel-captured-in-cafrica-was-a-top-commander>.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Okiror, 1.

<sup>163</sup> Roman Loimeier, "Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria," *Africa Spectrum* 47, no. 2 (February 2012): 137-55.

prayer group in Maiduguri (Borno State) in 2002.<sup>164</sup> As Adam Nossiter of the New York Times observed, the school established by Yusuf comprised of “ragged boys” whose primary education focused on memorization of the Koran.<sup>165</sup>

The boys were generally not cared for and they lived by begging for money or food. These boarding students became staunch followers of the teachings of the Koran and were sometimes used in religious clashes.<sup>166</sup> When state institutions fail to address ills in society during the early stages, as was witnessed in Nigeria, there is often the tendency for those fostering such ideologies to prosecute harmful acts against society. Were federal institutions to address the issues of child abuse from the early stages in Nigeria, the movement that is now “Boko Haram” would probably not have survived. There are often problems associated with societal actions or inactions in protecting children.

#### Political Factors

Governments have total responsibility to protect children and ensure that laws be enacted to keep them safe just as anti-personnel mines are prohibited from modern battlefields through international legislations.<sup>167</sup> The responsibility to protect is a genuine requirement for nations. Countries have the primary responsibilities to protect themselves

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<sup>164</sup> James J. F. Forest, *Confronting the Terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria* (MacDill AFB, FL: Joint Special Operations University, May 2012), accessed March 14, 2016, <https://jsou.socom.mil>.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Faulkner, 492.

against aggression (foreign or domestic), and also protect all human life including that of children.<sup>168</sup> It is important to note, however, that there are sufficient laws in place that are meant to protect children. The laws prohibiting the use of children range from domestic statutes to international conventions.<sup>169</sup> It is not about the availability of the law but rather the political and international systems to ensure the laws serve the interest of children. The inability to enforce enacted legislation is a major constraints facing society today.<sup>170</sup> Governments have the responsibility to protect their citizens, and a large part of that protection involves the safeguarding of children from partaking in armed conflicts.<sup>171</sup> International standards and best practices to protect children are more effective when applied at the national and institutional levels. For example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibits the abuse of children and admonishes states to adopt stringent measures that protect children. Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:

States parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> United Nations, "The Responsibility to Protect," accessed February 26, 2016, <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/responsibility.shtml>.

<sup>169</sup> The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, African Charter on Children's Rights, the Hague Convention, Paris Commitments, the Child Protection Act of 2008, etc., are relevant provisions preventing the use of children in armed conflicts.

<sup>170</sup> Faulkner, 493.

<sup>171</sup> See UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 1; Section 1.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.



In Liberia, the effects of a failed state and the consequences it can have on children are clearly evident. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, the adoption of children to fight the prolonged civil wars affected the Minor River basin in similar proportions.<sup>173</sup> In regions with historical patterns of conflict, the economic benefits for natural resources can be vital to the continuance of insurgencies.<sup>174</sup> This was true of the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone where child soldiers fought in both countries as mercenaries.<sup>175</sup> According to the TRC's final report on Liberia, the Armed Forces of Liberia used children as underage combatants during the Liberian civil conflicts.<sup>176</sup> The same can be argued in Sierra Leone where many children interchangeably fought both the Liberian civil wars and the civil conflicts that plagued Sierra Leone for decades.<sup>177</sup> We constantly see the failure of state institutions to protect children during violent armed conflicts and the potential long and short term consequences.

The enactments of laws (domestic or international) are important, but it is the implementation of those laws that is quintessential to the growth and posterity of any society. In 1924 when the League of Nations (now United Nations) adopted its first declaration on the rights of the child, there was an inherent need for special care and

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<sup>173</sup> Murphy, 70-71.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, 62.

<sup>177</sup> Faulkner, 499.

protection for the developing child.<sup>178</sup> State institutions are meant to serve as enforcing mechanisms by which the established statutes to protect children during war situations are enforced. Examination in the current problem reveals that it is not the absence or shortage of laws to protect children in armed conflicts, but rather the lack of enforcement of existing laws. The major drawback is the enforcement of the existing laws by political and state institutions.

The need to enforce laws through a state-centric or institutional approach reveals another aspect of the argument on enforcement: the proliferation of Non-state actors on the modern battlefield. As General McChrystal observed in *Team of Teams*, the environment in which wars are currently fought, are defined by “twenty-first century factors.”<sup>179</sup> Political institutions are currently faced with complex operational concerns and the ability to control the actions of non-state actors is becoming more complex daily. Whether in political, military, or business world, the twenty-first century is characterized by complex and rapid changes in technology and culture that has come to influence the ways life is conducted. The existence of non-state actors often has the potential to derail efforts made by political institutions to correct some of the problems of child soldiering.

Dealing with the non-state actor dilemma requires states to be more agile, adaptive, and capable of change based on constant assessments.<sup>180</sup> For example, the seizure of school going children in Nigeria by Boko Haram did not only contravene

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<sup>178</sup> Guy Goodwingill and Ilene Cohn, *Child Soldiers: The Role of Children in Armed Conflicts* (Oxford: Council on Foreign Relations, 1997).

<sup>179</sup> Stanley McChrystal, *Team of Teams* (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2015), 2-3.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

Nigeria's sovereignty, but also exasperated existing problems in enforcing international laws to protect children affected by armed conflicts. Once again, it is worth mentioning Faulkner's point that international conventions that protect children as underage combatants should be enforced just as those of anti-personnel mines would.<sup>181</sup> To further emphasize this point, recent efforts have been made to reinforce the need to protect children in all circumstances, including situations involving the use of non-state actors. The *Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2008* defines child soldier as a person under the age of eighteen who has been recruited or used in armed conflicts by forces distinct from the armed forces of a state.<sup>182</sup> The Act also stresses the importance of protecting girls in conflict situations who are more likely to face other factors such as the risk of exclusion from disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs.<sup>183</sup> The reinforcement of laws to protect children in armed conflicts indicates the need to improve enforcement mechanisms and standardization of the international legal systems for prosecution of both state and non-state actors.

The socio-political problems of child soldiering, therefore, should focus more on enforcement measures of international and domestic laws rather than the creation of new ones. There are current international and domestic laws in existence to protect children during armed conflicts however; adherence to the existing laws is the primary reason why children are still prevalent on the battlefield. Additionally, majority of the existing laws

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<sup>181</sup> Faulkner, 492.

<sup>182</sup> *The Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2008*, accessed February 26, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/135981.pdf>.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

concentrate on protecting children during and after wars. Further emphasis on protecting children through the enforcement of domestic and international law would curtail the involvement of children in armed conflicts before the impact of those conflicts affect them. When state or non-state actors choose to violate international law, this should serve as a trigger for the international community to act as a means of curbing the actions.

### Economic Factors

The socio-political conditions that exist in war often create negative economic consequences. The lack of basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, or clothing is among the basic consequences associated with the socio-political impact of child soldiering. For example, the loss of one or both parents during an armed conflict, may result in homelessness of children during armed incursions. In other instances, the child may voluntarily choose to be part of an armed conflict either because his parents can no longer provide for him or her as a consequence of the conflict or because he or she was coerced by his or her peers. In other instances, warlords may forcibly recruit children to join their factions. Whatever the case or means of recruitment, belonging to a warring faction or government force usually has tangible economic benefits for the participants.<sup>184</sup> The participants in such conflicts consider current gains and seldom envisage long term economic implications for their actions. The resources gathered by children primarily benefits both state and non-state actors to the conflict.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Achvarina and Reich, 133-134.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

Most children employed as underage combatants do not receive salaries from the warring factions. The main benefits as underage combatants is the protection provided by warlords which serve to fill the voids created as a result of the parents absence.<sup>186</sup> The protection provided by the warlords usually takes on an economic form such as food, shelter, and clothing.<sup>187</sup> Children under such conditions are easily susceptible to being recruited into warring factions because they lack adequate and consistent means of survival or source of income. When guns are the primary survival means, underage combatants may easily loot goods and services from stores and businesses in urban settlements. These goods are carried away and are in some instances resold to the previous owners.<sup>188</sup> Children under these circumstances make choices that have long term consequences on their growth and personal developments.<sup>189</sup>

From a human resource stand point, child soldiering can create severe consequences for a nation or region.<sup>190</sup> Many economists believe that labor makes up a critical part of the national income accounting model of any given society.<sup>191</sup> Some managerial economists even argue that labor is perhaps the most important factor of

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<sup>186</sup> Myriam S. Denov, *Child Soldiers Sierra Leone's Revolutionary Unified Front* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 173.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 857.

<sup>189</sup> Stephen Ellis, "Liberia: The Violence of Democracy," *African Studies Review* 49, no. 3 (December 2006): 161-62.

<sup>190</sup> Murphy, 71.

<sup>191</sup> American Sociological Association, "Good Times, Bad Times: Postwar Labor's Share of National Income in Capitalist Democracies," *American Sociological Review* 75, no. 5 (October 2010): 729-63.

production in an industry.<sup>192</sup> Proponents of this argument foster their ideas on the premise that technology drives changes in business and the human way of life. Societies with a lot more educated workforce are better able to supply existing technological changes to the means of production and are more likely to increase overall productive capacities as a society.<sup>193</sup> Nations whose youths engage in war at an early age are therefore likely to have poor productive capacities in the long term if the labor force is not enhanced or replaced with a more educated generation. Such countries struggle to have an adequate labor force to meet the competing demands of their industries. The Liberian labor force comprises diaspora expats fill top-level managerial and executive positions. This is true for both the public and private sectors. When the Liberian civil war grew out of control in the late 1980s, a significant portion of educated citizens left in search of safety. Most of the youths remaining in Liberia at that time had adequate access to any form of higher education. Where middle level schools were available there were no set standardized curricula that drove the operations of these academic institutions. The Liberian Ministry of Education reports that from 1986 to 1989 alone; more than 800,000 school children were displaced by the civil war.<sup>194</sup> Given the existing situation in Liberia at the time, it can be said that most of the children who remained in Liberia were at higher risks of becoming child soldiers.

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<sup>192</sup> Donald Hoke, "Ingenious Yankees, the Rise of the American System of Manufactures in the Private Sector," *The Journal of Economic History* 46, no. 2 (June 1986): 489-91.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 490.

<sup>194</sup> Brian Lai and Clayton Thyne, "The Effect of Civil War on Education, 1980-97," *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 3 (May 2007): 277-92.

After the civil war, inefficient and inadequate labor supply resulted in Liberia relying heavily on expat labor force. As more opportunity emerged in and out of Liberia for younger Liberians to obtain higher education, this situation is beginning to change. Low levels of education among the population are largely due to the relative periods of stability that had existed in Liberia since the late 1980s. Even today, most of the youths who study abroad do so through the use of international or diplomatic scholarships and grants. The Government of Liberia is the primary beneficiary of these scholarships. The levels of efficiency in the public sector are increasing due to these international educational opportunities. On the other hand, this creates shortage of qualified labor force within the private sector. This is because private enterprises in Liberia generally cannot afford funding overseas or higher educations for their employees. As more youths are educated, this is likely to change as publicly educated Liberians begin to fill positions currently held by international employees. When society adopted a more positive posture to education through higher education, this can have short and long term benefits to society. More investment in education will help Liberia secure its future by increasing the productive capacities of the labor force. This will also potentially limit the chances of civil wars or the use of child soldiers since the population will be able to make informed decisions.

The current situation in Liberia relative to employment has the potential to create future conflicts if not resolved. Differences in education between more experienced and qualified Liberians as compared to the majority, most of whom were affected by the Liberian civil war, could have attendant consequences for future generations if the current situation remains unchanged. As Sylvia Sanchez observed, in *In-or-Outside? The*

*Return of Qualified Diaspora Members and their Role in Building Post-Conflict*

*Governance*, Liberians who remained in Liberia throughout the civil war tend to resent those who come from the diasporas and are likely to hold higher positions in government, the private sector, or other non-governmental organizations.<sup>195</sup> It should be noted, however, that some locally educated Liberians do get executive-level jobs with the Liberian government and other non-governmental organizations.

The proportions of Liberians with overseas experience that hold top-level managerial jobs, notwithstanding, surpass those who were locally educated.<sup>196</sup> The differences in the level of employment between diaspora Liberians and those educated locally are mostly due to the poor distribution of skill sets among most youths in Liberia that were affected by the civil war.<sup>197</sup> For instance, only 3.1 percent of working youths affected by the civil war have completed vocational education in post-conflict Liberia.<sup>198</sup> Most of those trained however, do not meet the requirements of employers due mostly to lack of experience which is often sought for among employees. As a result, 47.8 percent

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<sup>195</sup> Sylvia Sanchez Villa, “In- or Outsiders? The Return of Qualified Diaspora Members and the Role in Rebuilding Post-Conflict Governance” (Master’s thesis, University of Kent, Brussels School of International Studies, 2011), accessed February 28, 2016, <https://www.kent.ac.uk/brussels/documents/journal/2011/Sylvia%20S%20C3%A1nchez%20Villa%20-%20The%20Return%20of%20Qualified%20Diaspora%20Members%20and%20Their%20Role%20in%20Rebuilding%20Post-Conflict%20Governance.pdf>.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>197</sup> Ministry of Education, *Liberia Country Report for the 2014 Ministerial Conference on Youth Employment*, vol. 1. series 1 (Monrovia: Ministry of Education, 2014).

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.



are not qualified for the jobs they do and the active overall employment of youths is only 22 percent with most employed in the public sector.<sup>199</sup>

Children who engage in war at an early age are much more likely to be unqualified for a vast majority of the jobs with the highest earning potentials in Liberia today. In most cases, employers prefer Liberians with international experiences because of the general perception that those educated overseas will most likely surpass the experiences or qualifications of those educated locally.<sup>200</sup> Realistically, the governmental or private sectors seek to employ the best qualified labor force to meet the individual requirements of their organizations, regardless of the prevailing circumstances. In addition to qualification, employers typically prefer a potential job candidate with the highest level of work experience. Due to the prolonged conflict in Liberia, the skills and work experiences desired for most top jobs are seldom found among Liberian youths.

The Liberian government continues to send more Liberians overseas for education, while at the same time increasing the level of higher education at home to address these concerns. In spite of these efforts, the likelihood of educating former child soldiers is problematic as most ex-combatants are usually unwilling to reintegrate and become productive members of society.<sup>201</sup> This is perhaps due to the late development patterns in formal education that are usually associated with former child soldiers. Proportionally, the generation of youths who were in Liberia during the civil war were

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Morten Boås and Anne Hatloy, “‘Getting in, Getting out’: Militia Membership and Prospects for Re-integration in Post-War,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 46, no. 1 (March 2008): 35-35.

negatively affected to a higher degree. This impact continues to have effects on former child soldiers who are largely uneducated with no vocations or skill sets. Most of the victims are adults in Liberia and have no marketable skills to contribute to society.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

The Liberian Civil War ensued from long standing sectarian conflicts that existed among the inhabitants from the formative stages of what would later become Africa's first independent Republic. Liberia was a segregated society for more than a century after gaining independence in 1847.<sup>202</sup> The political, economic and social divide negatively influenced the development of the Liberian society and by extension, the Armed Forces of Liberia. The Civil War later had regional consequences and spread across Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, and other regions in West Africa.

#### Responsibility to Protect

Children are often vulnerable populations exploited by armed insurrections during conflicts. Despite the existence of current international laws to protect children, the increase of underage combatants in armed conflicts depicts the need for society to ensure laws are adhered to by all parties to a conflict. These laws should be aimed at protecting children during armed insurrections. The protection of children is especially applicable before conflicts affect children who may not directly be a part of the hostilities. International and national laws of armed conflicts are the primary standardized means to protect children. These mechanisms are used at the local and international levels to control state and non-state actors in the exploitation and use of children in armed conflict while at the same time punish perpetrators. At this point little has been accomplished to protect the child victims before they are affected by armed conflicts.

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<sup>202</sup> Mastey, 153.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Hague Convention, the Geneva Conventions and its Additional Protocols, are a few of the international legal instruments that specifically stress the need to protect children in war situations. These conventions, among others, are essentially concerned with child protection during or after conflict situations. Other international legal instruments aimed at protecting children include the Paris Declaration, the Rome Statute, and the Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2008. All of these conventions currently exist but enforcement is inconsistent. The *Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2008* mandates state and non-state actors must prevent children from being used in armed conflicts throughout all stages of the conflicts.<sup>203</sup> The Act shows two essential points. First, the Act reemphasizes the need to protect children during all stages of armed conflicts.<sup>204</sup> This indicates that either the current existing laws are not being followed, or there are lapses in the current systems that have not adequately remedied the problem of child soldiering. Second, the Act's protection of children children identify state and non-state actors that are likely to use underage combatants. The adherence mechanisms that are applicable to state institutions are also applicable to non-state institutions or actors that are capable of using underage combatants.

In Liberia, for example, no single warring faction is exempt from the use of child soldiers. As the final TRC Report on Liberia identifies, even the Armed Forces of Liberia used child soldiers during the Liberian civil war.<sup>205</sup> Liberia as an international signatory

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<sup>203</sup> See *Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2008*.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, 62.

to the child rights conventions failed to implement those mandates during the civil conflicts.

The Government of Liberia has not always prioritized child protection before children become victims of armed conflicts. This is also true for most nations that use child soldiers as they themselves are a part of the international political system, and are signatories to the existing statutes of limitations on the employment of underage combatants. Non-state actors may not be signatories of international accords but as inhabitants of any given state or territory, they become subject to the laws of the territory in which they exist. It is therefore the responsibility of the international and national political structures and institutions to ensure the use of child soldiers in armed conflicts is prevented.

With the growing effort been made to ensure children are protected before, during, and after armed conflicts, it is essential nations demonstrate the protection of children during war is paramount for the employment of armed forces. Unless otherwise defined by international laws and under peculiar circumstances, all children should be stopped from participating in armed conflicts. The Laws of Armed Conflicts are mandatory requirements, and the protection of children under these existing laws is a matter of urgent concern. It is however important for laws to be proactive than reactive processes in ensuring children are protected during armed conflicts.

A break down in the political structure of a nation affects the social wellbeing and development of children. This condition also affects the socio-political and economic wellbeing of society in the long term. War impacts the social fabric of families, the adequate nurturing and development of children, and the growth and development of

stable societies. During prolonged conflicts, children disproportionately lose their lives during the heat of combat.<sup>206</sup> In other instances, the children join the war efforts and get connected to warlords primarily because the warlords serve as a family unit that fills the voids created by the absence of their parent(s).<sup>207</sup> The need to belong socially in society also tends to make child soldiers become part of a warring faction based on their own volition.<sup>208</sup> This is usually attributable to the peer pressure that a child may be subjected to from prior friendships before the wars or conflicts began. To stop the use of children, strict adherence to the UN Common Approach to Justice for Children should become a binding requirement for armed forces in combat.

The UN agreed that the rule of law needs to be strengthened in most conflict situations. As part of the Millennium Development Goals, the UN adopted the Millennium Declaration and defined a common approach that nations should employ in ensuring the social and peaceful development of children.<sup>209</sup> Principles 4 and 6 of the UN Common Approach emphasize the rights of children to be protected from abuse, exploitation, and violence. Principle 4 focuses on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.<sup>210</sup> It deals with the ability to adhere to the basic human rights and tenets that define the true dignity of a person without distinctions based on race, sex,

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<sup>206</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 5.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>209</sup> United Nations, A/Res/55/2, *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm/>.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 1.

creed, or religion.<sup>211</sup> Principle 6 specifically requires that the protection mechanisms put forth in the Millennium Declaration meet national and international standards, and also defines jurisdiction over state and non-state actors.<sup>212</sup> Principle 6 is built on the fundamental values of freedom of the human person, equity in the eyes of the law and the right to enjoy fundamental respect purely on the basis of internationally acceptable standards, and a shared responsibility among nations to live in peace with one another.<sup>213</sup> Freedom as defined in the Millennium Declaration does not only concentrate on the rights of adults, but also on the ability to raise children in dignity, freedom from fear of hunger and violence, oppression and injustice.<sup>214</sup>

There is an economic dimension to the use of child soldiers that affects nation building in the long term. Societies that employ children in combat are likely to struggle with developing a qualified labor force over a protracted period. It is therefore possible that most of the future labor requirements for a nation will be provided by skilled persons in the diasporas that can fill in future vacancies, a condition that may result in diaspora conflicts in post-conflict societies.<sup>215</sup> Historically, children who are susceptible to become child soldiers have low education, come from broken homes, or are likely to be

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Caroline Hughes, “The Policy of Knowledge: Ethnicity, Capacity, and Return in Post-Conflict Reconstruction Policy,” *Review of International Studies* 1, no. 2 (May 2011): 1493-14, accessed March 16, 2016, [http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/5994/1/Hughes\\_2001\\_Politics\\_of\\_Knowledge.pdf](http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/5994/1/Hughes_2001_Politics_of_Knowledge.pdf).

impacted by wrong choices made as a result of peer influences.<sup>216</sup> Whatever the means, it is common to see that a nation with more of its youths as child soldiers is likely to be poor despite available resources.

Different conflict models influence the economic realities of child soldiering. In the Coerced Youth Model, adults force their victims and have direct or indirect influences on the children. Relationships in the Coerced Youth Model are built on a client-patron basis in which the adults (patrons) dictate the outcome of the children (clients).<sup>217</sup> In Liberia (and Sierra Leone), a majority of the children who followed warlords did so because they were forced to make those choices. The need to survive and fulfill an economic want is a critical factor that leads to children becoming underage combatants.

Of particular relevance for analyzing the use of child soldiers in Liberia is the Revolutionary Model. The Revolutionary Model stresses how marginalized youths of any given society (or those made to think they are marginalized) for protracted periods become susceptible to revolutions.<sup>218</sup> As previously discussed in chapter 4, this model was applicable in Uganda when the LRA felt it was defending the Acholi people who had being marginalized (according to the proponents of the conflict) for long periods in Ugandan history. Similarly in Liberia, from the onset of Liberia as a nation, inadequacies in the distribution of social, political, and economic wealth were causative factors for division. This historical precedence led youths to feel that they had been ostracized from the social, political, and economic life of Liberia for decades. This is especially

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<sup>216</sup> Faulkner, 496.

<sup>217</sup> Murphy, 64.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.



applicable to those youths who were of native ancestry. The revolutionary tendencies in Liberia soon took on regional dimensions in Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. This was evident by the RUF incursions in Sierra Leone from Liberia and the use of the Cote d'Ivoire-Liberia border on December 24, 1989 by Charles Taylor to launch the National Patriotic Front of Liberia through Nimba, the northern region of Liberia.<sup>219</sup>

The influence of the Delinquent Youth Model in Liberia is not as widespread across the problem sets in Liberia as compared to the Coerced Youth or Revolutionary Models. The Delinquent Youth Model emphasizes the negative effects of neo-patrimonial cultures.<sup>220</sup> The disadvantaged members of society (usually in the majority) tend to be allegiant to the potential decision makers or power brokers in a given society. In return for this loyalty, the youths (children) follow the person or organization offering any means of assistance. This Model is applicable to Liberia primarily through the application of different historical periods. After Liberia's independence in 1847, the prolonged history of division made some members of the Liberian society disadvantaged compared to others. Eventually, as more natives were educated and integrated in the national government, the class gap began to narrow. On the basis of familial relationship, most of the other members of the hinterland owed homage to the few members of the hinterland who had acquired Western education.

The economic, political, and social viability of these models have one fact in common: that child soldiering is a major and common phenomenon facing society today.

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<sup>219</sup> Stephen Ellis, *Liberia 1989-1994: A Study of Ethnic and Spiritual Violence*, 8th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press on Behalf of The Royal African Society, 2010), accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/723778.pdf>.

<sup>220</sup> Murphy, 64.

Based on the international standard of the responsibility to protect by sovereign states, domestic laws should be consistent with the protection of all children around the world. While nations have the right to exercise control and administer the internal affairs of their territories, the international system also has the right to react to save lives during violent conflicts.<sup>221</sup> In this context, the UN Common Approach to Justice for Children is highly relevant. Additionally, the need to stop child soldiering is an established principle under the UN Charter. According to the *Outcome Doctrine of the 2005 United Nations World Summit*, the UN Common Approach Framework is based on three pillars:

1. The State carries the primary responsibility for protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, and their incitement;
2. The international community has a responsibility to encourage and assist States in fulfilling this responsibility;
3. The international community has a responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian, and other means to protect populations from these crimes. If a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take collective action to protect populations, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.<sup>222</sup>

Nations have the primary responsibility to prevent children from becoming participants in armed conflicts.<sup>223</sup> In the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone, both countries employed state-owned infrastructure and resources to subject children to armed

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<sup>221</sup> International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect*, December 2011, accessed April 10, 2016, [http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/ICISS Report.pdf](http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/ICISS%20Report.pdf).

<sup>222</sup> United Nations, “Responsibility to Protect.”

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

combats.<sup>224</sup> When domestic institutions do not function to protect their citizens, it often results in failed states. The international community is the only medium that can stop despotic regimes from creating mayhem within their own country. This includes the protection of children during armed conflicts. Crisis response usually starts at the regional level which requires that Liberia has a good standing relationship with her neighbors within the sub-region. From a systems perspective the in-depth and detailed coordination required to address incipient or ongoing armed conflict tends to make an international response appear lethargic. This therefore creates the need to develop swift intervention mechanisms that transcend diplomatic barriers created by the international system as long as the intervention itself is meant to prevent the exploitation of children as underage combatants. The intervention mechanism must be such that it can be implemented at the beginning of an armed conflict especially in the case of a country that willingly violates the prohibition against child soldiering or does not have the ability to stop the organizations or individuals that are promulgating the use of child soldiers.

Recommendations on the need to Prevent  
the use of Child Soldiers

Although it is difficult to predict that child soldiering will end in the short term, it is likely that society can alleviate the problems of underage combatants over time. Commitments by national and international institutions are the key ingredients that must be present. The synchronization of national and international efforts is likely to result in the prevention of children being abused as underage combatants. To date more than

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<sup>224</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, 62.

300,000 children have participated as combatants in armed conflicts worldwide.<sup>225</sup> This number continues to increase in spite of prevailing international laws to prosecute criminals. The application of these laws must be proactive in order to prevent the use of children during armed conflicts. For instance, the International Criminal Court was established on July 17, 1998 based on seven benchmarks.<sup>226</sup> Three of these benchmarks clearly depict reasons for international involvements to prevent the use of underage combatants.

Based on dictates contained within *Introduction to Justice in the Balance*, the ICC can intervene to prevent child soldiering based on “Benchmark One” which allows the LCC to prosecute criminals of armed conflicts regardless of a state’s consent requirement.<sup>227</sup> This benchmark allows the ICC to intervene at any stage of armed conflict to stop and or prosecute violators who use children in armed struggles. This intervention can be before (the point of this research), during, or after the beginning of hostilities. The point is to prevent children from being exploited as underage combatants during armed conflicts. Additionally, “Benchmark Five” of the ICC intervention mechanism gives the ICC the ability to prosecute war criminals whether the crimes occur in international or non-international conflicts.<sup>228</sup> Such interventions are relevant as it allows for the prosecution of non-state actors who may involve children in armed

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<sup>225</sup> Dye, 1.

<sup>226</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Summary of the Key Provisions of the ICC Statute,” December 1, 1998, accessed March 16, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/1998/12/01/summary-key-provisions-icc-statute>.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

conflicts. “Benchmark Six” of the ICC obligates belligerent forces to cooperate with the request of the ICC to conduct independent and relevant investigations aimed at prosecuting war criminals.<sup>229</sup> This too is relevant to ensure that warlords who use child soldiers can be prosecuted, and the availability of international legal instruments to commit warlords who may be found wanting.

Some African states have also begun to institute further legal instruments in their national laws to protect children. The need to popularize the efforts of states making these efforts is relevant to the attainment of international justice. Some nations in Africa or other parts of the world may have reservations about implementing this type of change but it can occur. Utilizing Ghana in West Africa as an example, the United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) completed a report in 2011 titled the *Report on the Mapping and Analysis of Ghana’s Child Protection System*. This initiative was meant to strengthen the protection of children in other parts of the world by focusing on the change that has occurred in Ghana.<sup>230</sup>

If the method employed by Ghana is implemented, enforced, and maintained, it could prevent children from being used in armed conflicts. For example, the report shows that a majority of the child-related conflicts currently occurring in Ghana, although not necessarily from war, can be traced to confusion arising from integrated actions or

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> UNICEF, “Report of the Mapping and Analysis of Ghana Child Protection System,” January 2011, accessed March 16, 2016, [http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/Ghana\\_Mapping\\_Analysis\\_Child\\_Protection.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/Ghana_Mapping_Analysis_Child_Protection.pdf).

inactions of the formal and informal systems.<sup>231</sup> The report further revealed that a majority of the existing child related problems are due to lack of parental care.<sup>232</sup> This results in abuses such as rape, child labor, and other forms of exploitation.<sup>233</sup> The takeaway is that because Ghana has been able to specifically address those child related vices that are most likely to influence their growth and development, the country as a whole is well on its way to success and has a much brighter future. The promulgation of this mindset will directly impact the ability of those inclined to utilize children in future conflicts by making it much more difficult.

Generally, states have the primary responsibility to protect their citizens. This requirement is consistent with the sovereign right to protect as given to states under the doctrine of Westphalia in 1648.<sup>234</sup> This responsibility includes protecting children in all societies as stipulated in the CRC.<sup>235</sup> Each nation's society has an obligation to adhere to international laws that call on states to protect children. The Convention of the Rights of the Child, for example, specifically mandates all states to safeguard the future of children

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<sup>231</sup> The Formal System refers to government, international organizations, and local NGOs which are predominantly recognized or endorsed by the central government. The Informal System refers to child protection initiatives undertaken by families, communities and children themselves. See page 6 of the above report for details.

<sup>232</sup> UNICEF, "Report of the Mapping and Analysis of Ghana Child Protection System," 11.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> See United Nations, "Responsibility to Protect."

<sup>235</sup> UNICEF, "Fact Sheet: A Summary of the Rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child," 2.

within its borders.<sup>236</sup> Recent international conventions such as the Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2008, the Paris Declaration, the Hague Convention, the ICC, among others are indications that laws need to be proactive in preventing children from being negatively influenced by the actions of conventional or unconventional wars involving state or non-state actors.

Working along with UNICEF, Ghana developed social welfare programs that have contributed significantly to the growth and development of the human person. Other nations in Africa should also establish similar programs to help safeguard disadvantaged children. Proactive education programs are as equally essential as any other part of the welfare programs created by states. For example, by law in the United States all parents must provide for and take care of their children or risk losing them to the Government's welfare system.<sup>237</sup> Most countries in Africa, like Ghana, have a third world economy. These countries can examine the way that Ghana is conducting its programs and adapt them along similar lines.

### Deterrence

Existing international and national laws should be enforced to hold warlords accountable for utilizing underage combatants. International jurisdictions such as the ICC, the UN Common Approach Framework, the CRC, and regional organizations such as the African Union, the African Charter on the Rights of the Child, Economic

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Henry E. Hankerson, "Children Crisis in the United States: Child Abuse and Neglect--A Continuing Problem," *The Journal of Negro Education* 48, no. 3 (Summer 1979): 396-407, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2295056.pdf>.

Community of West African States, the Minor River Union, and other world bodies should be used to discourage and stop child soldering. It is important that national institutions support social welfare programs that incorporate community partnering with state institutions with the aim of protecting children in armed conflicts. It is essential that lessons learned from social welfare programs in countries such as the United States and Ghana should be applied with specific considerations to differing regional factors. The strengthening of the formal and formal justice processes during peacetime is also relevant to ensure children are prepared to meet the daily demands of the future. This will help safe children from criminals. The best form of deterrence against the use of children in armed conflict is the enforcement of current laws at the state and international levels. Although national governments have the responsibility to protect their citizens against all threats, foreign or domestic, it is the responsibility of the international community to intervene based on relevant legal statutes in curbing state or non-state actors who engage in child soldering.

#### Further Research on the Topic

Due to time and resource constraints, the researcher might have overlooked some of the ramifications or requirements to prosecute non-state actors. The research calls for international and national jurisprudence over cases of child soldiers linked with non-state actors, but the research did not clearly identify legal mechanisms that are readily available to hold non-state actors accountable. Future research should be conducted to deal with in-depth analysis on how non-state actors and institutions responsible for child soldering ought to be prosecuted. Concerns on command and control of such operations are also unclear in the current research. Furthermore, the research agrees that current laws



are reactive in protecting children from becoming child soldiers, but did not discuss the legal and bureaucratic procedures of enforcement that may be responsible for such delays. There is therefore the need for further research that clearly identifies reasons for these bureaucratic delays and identifies likely means by which they can be addressed. Lastly, the study primarily deals with child soldiers in Africa and emphasized the effects of child soldiering on society in the long term. However, there are many countries where child soldiering is common. Future studies should therefore concentrate on specific economic, political, or social factors that are peculiar to other regions since the specific political, economic, or social factors that influenced Liberia and Sierra Leone may not be true for other areas.

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